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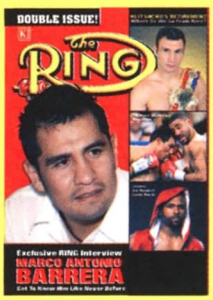

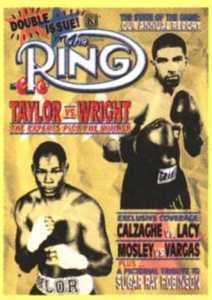

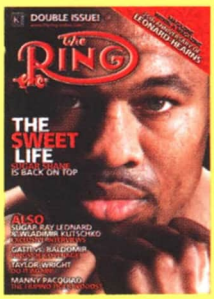

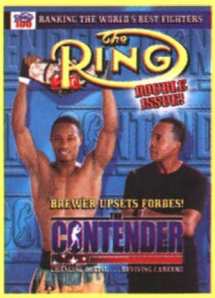

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Parting Shot?

Erik Morales announced his retirement after losing a unanimous decision to WBC lightweight titlist David Diaz on August 4. But the fight was close enough to allow "El Terrible" a little wiggle room on his somewhat hasty decision. For those who want to offer the 31-year-old evidence that he should continue, simply rip out these two pages and send them to Morales, care of Top Rank in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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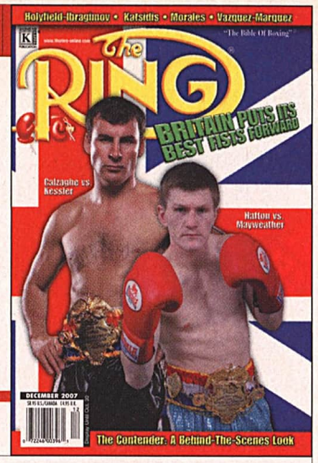

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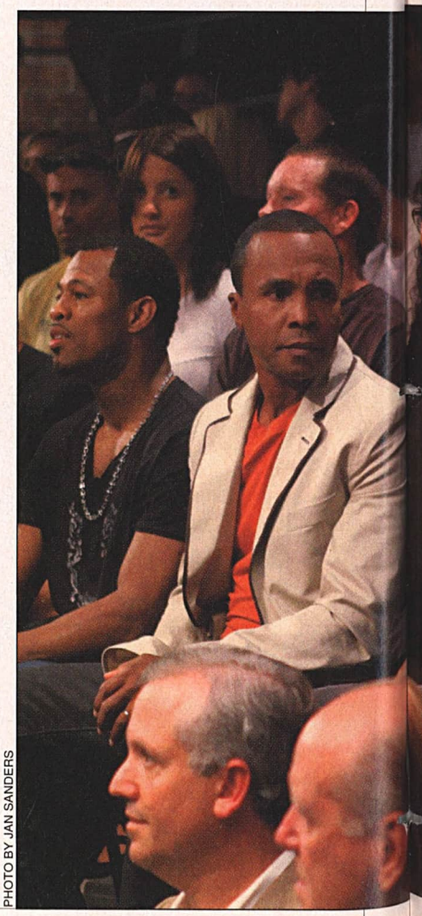
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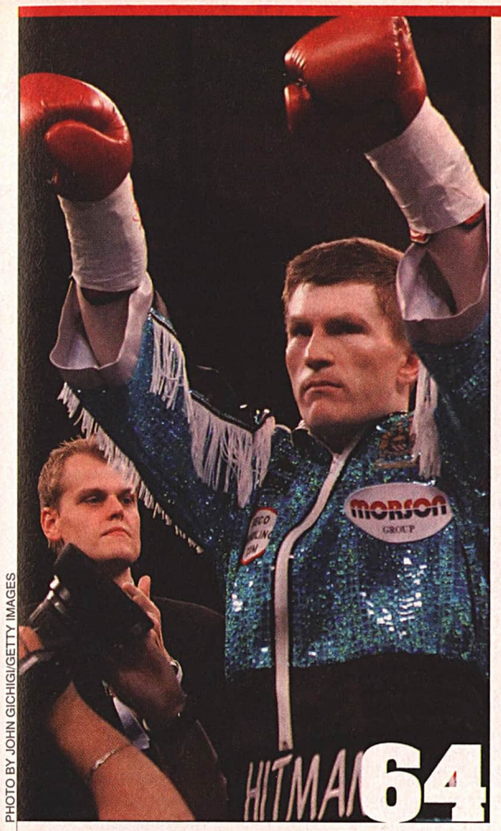

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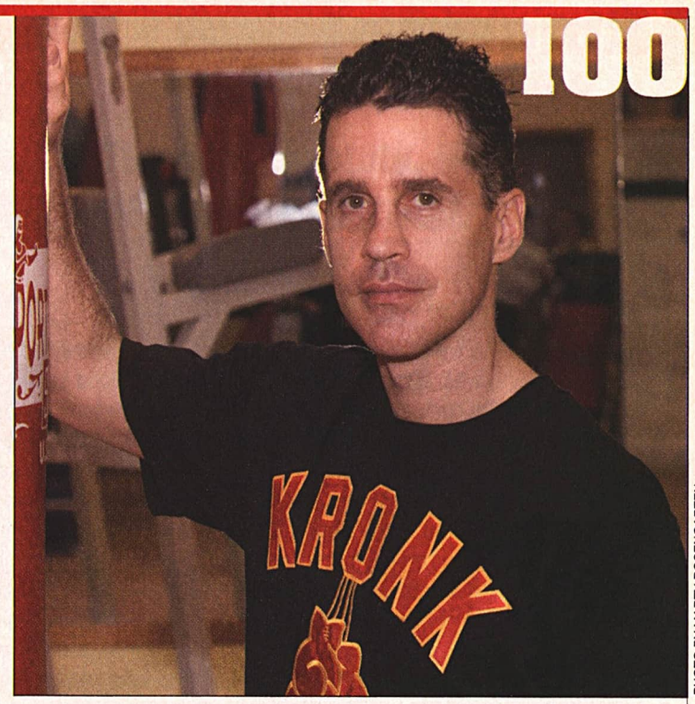

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The RING

Michael Vick's involvement in illegal dog fighting reminded me of how closely boxing was associated with other so-called blood sports back in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the bare-knuckle era, it wasn't just dogs versus dogs. It was also dogs versus bears, bulls, and badgers, all of which were lumped together with prizefighting and often covered in the same periodicals by the same journalists.

Last year, I had the privilege of examining Robert Cruikshank's "Road To The Fight" at the print room of the British Museum. It's a long, panoramic strip that illustrates the story of a prizefight from the signing of the articles of combat at a tavern to the aftermath of the fight, when bets were settled. Much of it concentrates on the journey from London, where the authorities enforced the law against bare-knuckle bouts, to the supposedly secret location in the nearby countryside. Actually, you didn't have to know where the fight was going to take place—the savvy fans followed the horse and cart hauling the ringposts and ropes.

The reasons that "The Road To The Fight" is so important is that it is one of the few historical documents that shows what went on not only in the ring, but also in the immediate area surrounding the squared circle. And if we are to believe eyewitnesses Cruikshank and Pierce Egan, who wrote the accompanying key, a lot of it involved bull baiting.

In this type of contest, a bull faces a series of dogs, many of which were either killed or maimed. Instead of championship belts, the dogs were awarded expensive, often jewel-encrusted collars. While the fight was clearly the main attraction, the same audience obviously approved of both.

During a visit the Philippines in 2004, I went to a cockfight held at the Elorde Sports Complex, which is owned by the family of the late Flash Elorde, the former junior lightweight champion of the world and still a national icon. The same complex houses a large boxing gym and dormitory, where many of the fighters under contract to the Elordes live and train. If there's anything the Filipinos love more than boxing, it's cockfighting. Cockfighting is also prevalent throughout much of Latin America and the Caribbean, two other places where boxing is very popular.

I make no judgments here, but there is an underlying link between boxing and the other blood sports that a lot of folks don't want to think about. True, there are some fundamental differences. Boxers supposedly box of their own free will, whereas most of the animals involved have no choice. But there is also an underlying factor involved in both activities, without which neither would exist: the atavistic pleasure human beings derive from violence.

We all like to draw distinctions and set parameters, but it doesn't matter whether that pleasure comes from watching two men box or two animals fight. It springs from the same root, always has, always will. It's part of being human and the reason you're reading this magazine.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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(215) 643-6385
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ADVERTISING ASSISTANT
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SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
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(815) 734-1212
CustSrvc@Kappapublishing.com

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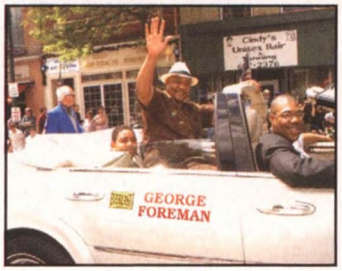
Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.



Hooray . . . George Foreman enjoys fans along parade route.

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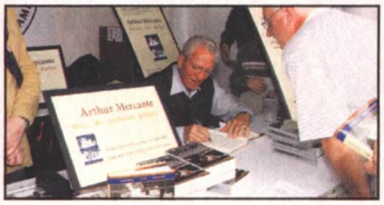


Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Proudly draped in Panamanian flag, Duran delivers induction speech.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

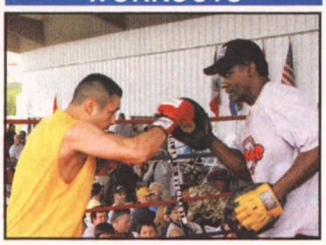
COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

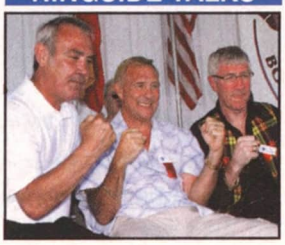
Ricardo Lopez points to his championship trunks.

WORKOUTS



Oscar Diaz works the bag mitts with Tommy Brooks during public workout.

RINGSIDE TALKS



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Castro Clamps Down

Amateur stars Guillermo Rigondeaux, 25, and Erislandy Lara, 24, are back home in Cuba after what appeared to be a failed bid to defect. Rigondeaux, two-time Olympic bantamweight champion, and Lara, the reigning world welterweight amateur champion, disappeared in July during the Pan American games, which were held in Brazil.

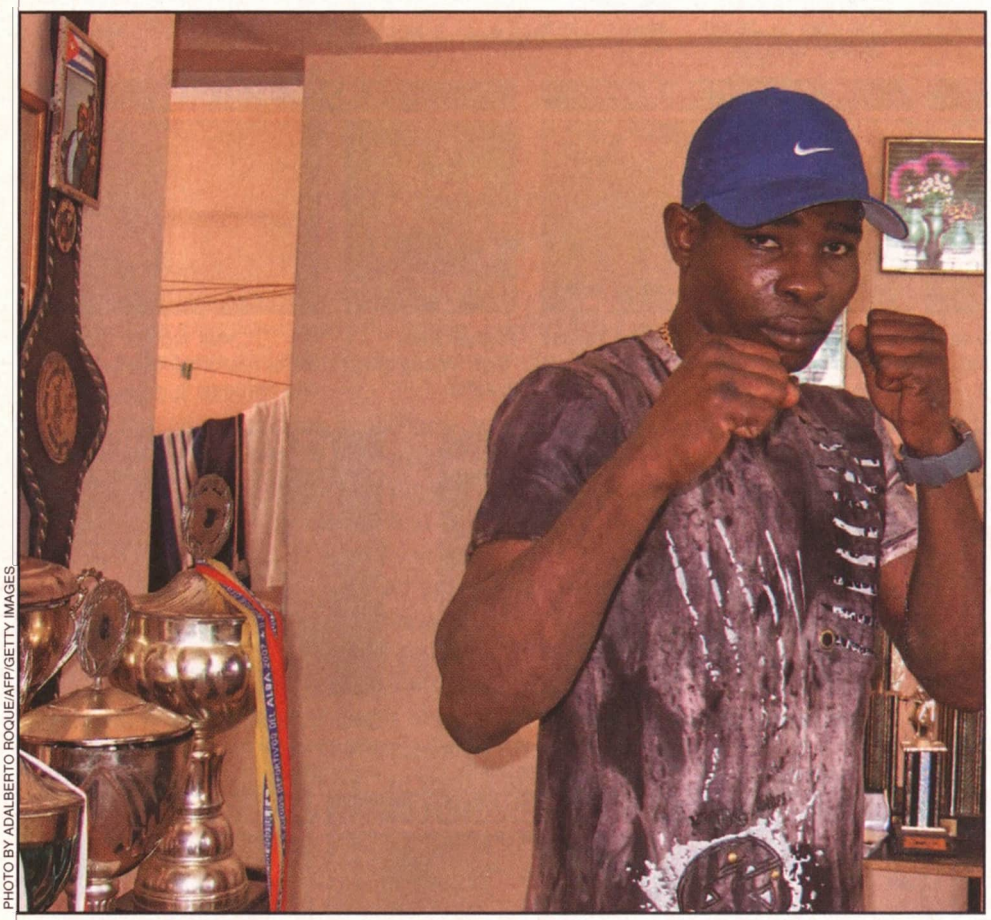


PHOTO BY ADALBERTO ROQUE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Rigondeaux poses with his trophies after returning to Cuba

When the two boxers failed to show up for their scheduled bouts, they were disqualified. It is believed that they went into hiding while awaiting visas to travel to Germany, where they were expected to box for Arena, a German promotional company that has already signed Yan Barthelemy, Yuriorkis Gamboa, and Odlanier Solis, a trio of Cubans that defected to Germany in February.

On August 2, Rigondeaux and Lara were arrested in the coastal resort city of Cabo Frio, near Rio de Janeiro, for overstaying their visas, and deported to Cuba. Brazilian authorities said the boxers had been partying and had run up an exorbitant tab at a hotel.

"That's not good news," said Arena CEO Ahmet Oner, "but I am not very shocked. After all the fuss Fidel Castro has made about the whole thing, there was always a chance of something like that happening. I just hope Fidel stops persecuting their friends and families in Cuba."

According to the 80-year-old Castro, the boxers would be treated well and "offered decent tasks in sports according to their knowledge and experience."

Meanwhile, after returning to their native land, Rigondeaux and Lara gave a different version of their Brazilian adventure. In an interview with the Communist Party newspaper *Granma*, they claimed they never intended to defect, never sought political asylum in Brazil, and never signed a contract with German promoters. They also claim they were "intercepted" by two men while shopping and spent the night drinking with them, after which they were afraid to return to their team because they knew they couldn't make weight after the binge.

Lara said one of the men offered him $138,000 to turn pro in Germany, where "we would be millionaires."

Regardless of what really happened to Lara and Rigondeaux, the episode may have long-range repercussions. A few days after the wayward duo returned to Cuba, Castro said he might bar his country's boxers from competing in the world championships in Chicago and other Olympic qualifying events.

"Cuba will not sacrifice one bit of honor, nor any of its ideas, for Olympic gold medals," said Castro, who also described boxing promoters as "Mafia sharks lurking about in search of fresh meat."

Fungus Kayos Mundine

The career of Australian super middleweight Tony Mundine, 29-3 (22), is in serious jeopardy following a bizarre occurrence at a New Zealand restaurant.

"We went to this restaurant and it was real smoky and it started to irritate my eye," said Mundine, who had recently undergone routine surgery to remove a growth from his left eye and was wearing a protective lens. "I must have pushed the contact lens and messed it up, and it was really hurting me.

"I went to the bathroom and I was in hysterics. I saw this women and she said, 'I've worn contacts before. The best way to clean it is with the mouth.' So I licked it and put it back in my eye."

That caused a fungus to form on Mundine's eye that has resulted in him losing sight, at least temporarily. The fighter's eye specialist, Dr. John Males, said it is highly unlikely that he'll regain full vision.

"I am prepared for the fact I might never fight again," said the 32-year-old Mundine, who last fought on June 27, 2007, when he won a unanimous 12-round decision over Pablo Daniel Zamora Nievas. "But it comes down to Allah and what He wants me to do. At the end of the day, it's God's will. I'm praying to Him to heal me, but ultimately it's His decision."

PHOTO BY ROBB COX/GETTY IMAGES

Mundine is examined at Sydney Eye Hospital

Did Danny Do It?

Danny Carbajal, the brother and former trainer of Hall of Famer Michael Carbajal, is in serious legal trouble and things could get worse for the 56-year-old Phoenix, Arizona, resident.

On July 25, Carbajal pleaded guilty before Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Andrew Klein to three counts of stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars in property and retirement accounts from his estranged (and now late) wife, Sally. According to the *New Phoenix Times*, Carbajal enlisted the aid of his daughters, Josephine and Celia, in fraudulent activities to enable their father to steal community property assets prior to a divorce trial.

On February 25, 2005, three days before Sally Carbajal was scheduled to appear in divorce court, she and her boyfriend, Gerry Best, were shot to death in a parking lot outside of their apartment. Court records suggest that Sally could have won approximately $750,000 of assets under Arizona's community-property laws.

Police detectives were suspicious from the start that Carbajal was behind the double homicide, but Danny has denied involvement, and, to date, nobody has been arrested in the murder case.

Carbajal had yet to be sentenced in the fraud case when this issue went to press, but the prosecutor is expected to ask the judge to impose, at least, a five-year sentence. Carbajal's daughters have already been placed on probation after pleading guilty to their role in the scheme to defraud their mother.

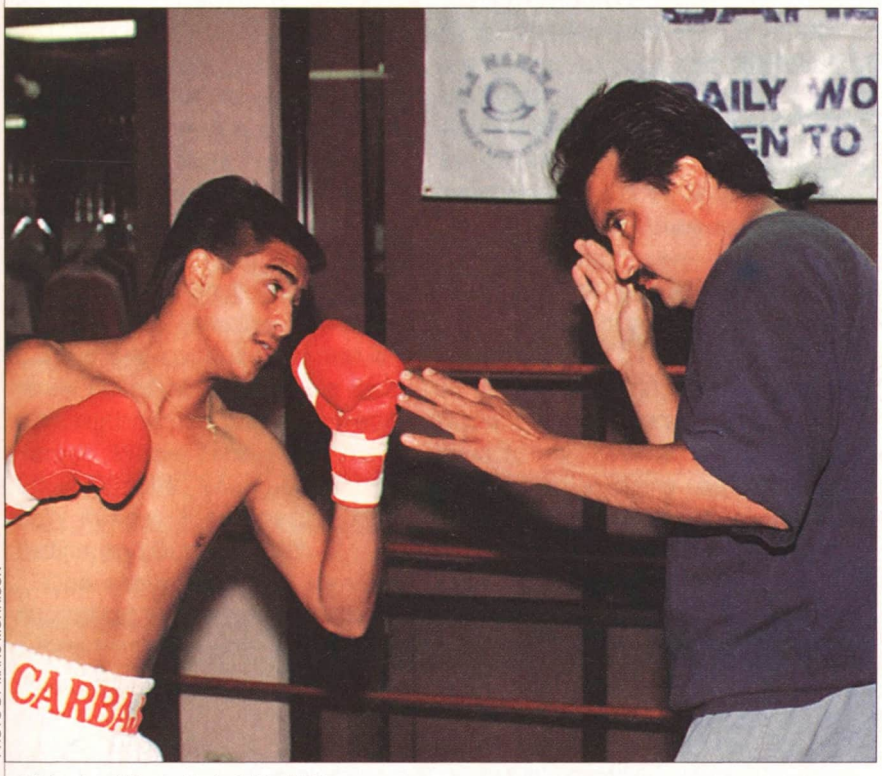


PHOTO BY MARC MORRISON

Michael and Danny Carbajal in 1990

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
7/18/07	Mike Oliver W 12 Cruz Carbajal	ESPN2	jf	C+	C+	C
	Oliver's progression to title contention continues, Carbajal only loses against top notch foes					
7/20/07	Fres Oquendo W 10 Elieser Castillo	ESPN2	h	C	C	D
	The only time Castillo showed aggression was during a press conference brawl					
7/20/07	Rogers Mtagwa W 12 Aldo Valtierra	Telefutura	f	C	C+	B
	Throwback to mauling 1950s club fights, right down to the plain black and white trunks					
7/21/07	Jorge Linares KO 10 Oscar Larios	PPV	f	B	A-	B+
	Heavy-handed Venezuelan was revelation of the PPV					
7/21/07	Michael Katsidis W 12 Czar Amonsot	PPV	l	B	B	A
	Welcome our first contestant in the "Next Gatti" sweepstakes					
7/21/07	**Bernard Hopkins W 12 Winky Wright**	**PPV**	**lh**	**A+**	**A-**	**B**
	Hopkins following in Archie Moore's footsteps, uses head and fists to wear down Wright					
7/27/07	Andre Berto W 10 Cosme Rivera	ESPN2	w	C	C	C
	Berto really enjoys throwing big punches; knockdown suggests he does not like taking them					
7/27/07	Martin Castillo W 10 Oscar Andradw	Telefutura	jb	C	C	C
	Thirty-year-old former titleholder seems stuck in a rut, an uninspired win					
7/28/07	Vernon Forrest W 12 Carlos Baldomir	HBO	jm	B	B-	B-
	Is the combined age of 72 a record high for a Boxing After Dark *main event?*					
8/01/07	Antonio Davis KO 5 Leon Bobo	ESPN2	f	C	C+	C
	The phrase "Too much, too soon" came to mind watching inexperienced Bobo manhandled					
8/03/07	David Toribio KO 1 Juan Novoa	Telefutura	m	D	C	B-
	Toribio lost nine of last 10; Novoa loses for first time in 10 fights					
8/03/07	Juan Mercedes W 12 Marino Montiel	Telefutura	jb	C+	C	C-
	Mercedes not as classy as his namesake car outwardly, but he has a solid engine					
8/03/07	Jean Pascal W 12 Kingsley Ikeke	ESPN2	sm	B	B-	C
	Roy Jones' stylistic influences on Pascal are obvious, which is not necessarily a good thing					
8/03/07	Kevin Johnson W 10 Damian Wills	Showtime	h	C	C+	C-
	If Johnson works hard he might become this era's Larry Donald					
8/04/07	Celestino Caballero W 12 Jorge Lacierva	Showtime	jf	B+	B+	C+
	Despite physical advantages, Caballero needed a late rally to retain title					
8/04/07	**Israel Vazquez KO 6 Rafael Marquez**	**Showtime**	**jf**	**A**	**A**	**A**
	Savagely entertaining, each blow expertly delivered to counter a previously landed punch					
8/04/07	Ulises Solis KO 8 Rodel Mayol	PPV	jfl	B	B	B
	Mayol hesitates, eats big right hand, and tastes the canvas face first					
8/04/07	David Diaz W 12 Erik Morales	PPV	l	A	B+	A-
	Morales of old looks good early; the old Morales fades late					
8/07/07	Francisco Palacios KO 6 Louis Azille	ESPN2	c	C	C+	C+
	Azille dominates all but the 20 seconds in which he is knocked out					
8/07/07	Joe Greene KO 1 Darryl Salmon	ESPN2	m	C	C	C+
	Salmon angers Greene by knocking him down, is kayoed a minute later					
8/08/07	Joshua Clottey W 10 Felix Flores	Versus	w	C+	C+	C+
	Clottey stays busy and reminds everyone he is the division's dangerman					
8/08/07	Tye Fields KO 7 Domonic Jenkins	Versus	h	C-	C	F
	Is it possible to write a sentence about Fields without referencing Primo Carnera?					
8/09/07	Bronco McKart W 12 Enrique Ornelas	Telefutura	m	C+	C+	B-
	McKart scores knockdown that separates the duo on the scorecards					
8/09/07	Rob Calloway W 10 Terry Smith	ESPN2	h	C	C+	B
	Calloway crowned king of America's journeyman heavyweights					
8/10/07	Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 1 Rey Bautista	HBO	jf	B	B+	C+
	What!? Bautista kayoed before I took a bite of my lumpia					
8/10/07	Gerry Penalosa KO 7 Jhonny Gonzalez	HBO	b	B	B	B-
	Gonzalez' liver might still be lodged in his throat					

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

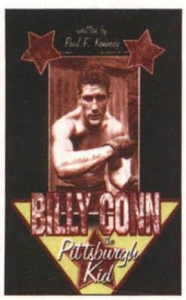
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net;Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino; Versus

Boxing Bookshelf

With the possible exception of James "Buster" Douglas, perhaps no other boxer is best known for just one bout than Billy Conn, and this for a fight that Conn lost. The "Pittsburgh Kid's" epic first battle with Joe Louis is considered by many as one of the greatest fights of all-time. What is unfortunate is how little the rest of Conn's Hall of Fame career has been discussed until now. Author Paul F. Kennedy attempts to rectify this situation with his book *Billy Conn: The Pittsburgh Kid* (Authorhouse Press, 224 pages, $25.50 hardcover, $15.99 soft cover,).

Kennedy covers the life and times of Conn from the beginning, and it is rather eye-opening for the uninitiated to learn that in addition to fighting Louis twice, Conn also defeated 10 current or future world champions, often being mentioned in debates over who was the greatest light heavyweight in history.



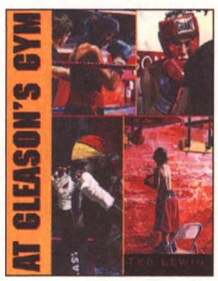
The book's prose often comes across in a "golly gee" rather than the more serious scholarship found in some other recent sports biographies, notably Mark Kriegel's stellar works on Joe Namath and Pete Maravich or any of the late David Halberstam's efforts. But despite this simplicity, Kennedy at least provides us with narrative of many of Conn's pre-Louis bouts that are rarely talked about, such as those with well-known pugilists Teddy Yarosz, Fritzie Zivic, Babe Risko, Vince Dundee, Young Corbett III, Solly Krieger, Fred Apostoli, Melio Bettina, and Gus Lesnevich.

One aspect in which Kennedy falls short is not giving us more detail on Conn's life in between fights, particularly when he began making a name for himself with his bouts versus the aforementioned champions. Whatever is covered is interesting but brief, leaving us wanting more. We do, however, get a good idea of how physically gifted Conn was as a fighter and why it was no surprise he gave "The Brown Bomber" so much trouble the first time they fought. We also come to understand just how much Pittsburgh was a hotbed of talented boxers in the 1930s and early-'40s.

The Pittsburgh Kid is a good starting point for learning more about the life of Conn, but a more in-depth and literary volume would also be welcome.

—Mike Greenhill

There have been quite a few books about boxing gyms over the years, most of them filled with atmospheric photos of grimy sweatboxes covered with tattered fight posters and populated by bent-nosed pugs. Now comes *At Gleason's Gym* (Roaring Brooks Press, 40 pages, hardcover, $17.95) by artist/author Ted Lewin, a refreshing change of pace from the same old format.



At Gleason's is intended for readers between five and nine years of age and focuses on nine-year-old amateur Sugar Boy Younan and other youthful boxers, including a number of girls. As you would expect from a book with such a young target audience, there's not a lot of text. It is Lewin's illustrations that really shine. From a panoramic view of the gym to my favorite, a small boy standing on a folding chair to reach the speedbag, they are delightfully rendered, most of them in vibrant color.

If you know a kid who is thinking about joining a boxing gym but is a bit reticent, *At Gleason's* is a reassuring look at what will happen if he or she decides to give it a try.

—Nigel Collins

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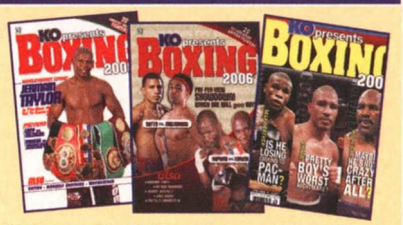

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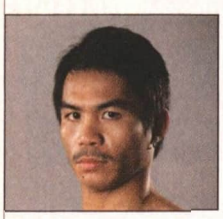
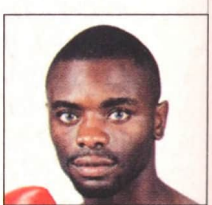
Outside the Ropes

Laila Ali and retired NFL receiver **Curtis Conway** were married in Los Angeles in late-July. Guests included Laila's father, **Muhammad Ali,** and her mother, **Veronica Porsche Anderson** ... HBO Pay-Per-View reported that there was approximately 305,000 buys of the **Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright** fight, generating roughly $15.3-million in revenue. In related news, the Nevada State Athletic Commission fined Hopkins $200,000 for instigating a weigh-in melee by smacking Wright in the face ... Filipino superstar **Manny Pacquiao** has filed a 30 million peso (approximately $663,000 U.S.) libel suit against four journalists who work for the *Manila Bulletin*. The complaint stemmed from the article "Trouble In Paradise—Again," which was published July 25 and reported that Pacquiao was a "compulsive gambler and is known to bet hundreds of thousands in casinos, cockfights, and billiards." Pacquiao's lawyer, **Franklin Gacal**, stressed that the fighter's contract with Nike states that he maintains a "good image" and that "when you say compulsive gambler, it pertains to a behavior or act independent of your freewill. In other words, [you're an] addict" ... Heavyweight **James Toney**, 38, had his one-year suspension for using steroids in a May 24 bout with **Danny Batchelder** cut in half following an appeal to the California Boxing Commission. Toney will now be eligible to start fighting again after November 24 ... Former IBF lightweight titleholder **Paul Spadafora** was released from the state prison in Albion, Pennsylvania, in early-August, where he'd been behind bars for violating parole. "Although the board acted in good faith in beginning technical parole violations proceedings against Mr. Spadafora, there is not enough evidence available to continue with parole violation proceedings at this time," said **Robert Bushey**, spokesman for the Parole and Probation Board ... Former WBC flyweight titleholder **Eric Morel**, 31, has also been released from prison after serving time for seconddegree sexual assault of an inebriated 15-year-old girl. Morel will have to register as a sex offender in his home state of Wisconsin ... In early-August, former junior welterweight champion **Carlos Hernandez**, 67, was seriously injured when he was hit by a car in Caracas. The hard-punching Hernandez, 60-12-4 (43), defeated American **Eddie Perkins** in January 1965 to become Venezuela's first world champion ... Former bantamweight champion **Lionel Rose**, 59, suffered a stroke in early-August, but has been released from Warragul Hospital in West Gippsland, Australia, and is expected to make a full recovery ... Undefeated middleweight prospect **Donovan George**, 15-0-1 (13), faces charges of sexual assault that could possibly cost him six to 30 years in prison if convicted. According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the 22-year-old boxer has been charged with eight counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault, 15 counts of criminal sexual assault, and four counts of sexual relations with a family member. These offenses supposedly took place between 1996 and 1998, when George was between 11 and 13 years old. The alleged victim was between five and eight years old. "I'm shocked by this," said George's promoter, **Bob Arum**. "I can't believe it. A guy is innocent until proven guilty, so we'll see what happens" ... Super middleweight **Antwun Echols**, 35, was shot in the leg while trying to break up a fight in a grocery store parking lot in Davenport, Iowa, and was later arrested on drug charges. Echols was taken to Genesis Medical Center for treatment and later charged with possession of crack cocaine ... Former British heavyweight champion **James Oyebola**, 47, was shot in the head outside of a London nightclub after asking three men to stop smoking inside the club. The Nigeria-born boxer never regained consciousness and died after doctors switched off his life-support machine on July 27. British authorities have arrested two men in connection with the fatal shooting, who have been released on bail while inquires continue. Oyebola turned pro in July 1987 and won the vacant British heavyweight title on November 19, 1994, by knocking out **Clifton Mitchell**, but lost it to **Scott Welch** in his first defense, and retired after being stopped by **Julius Francis** in September '96. At the time of his death, Oyebola was managing undefeated welterweight **Ajose Olusegun** ... Junior welterweight **Troy Harden**, 22, was found shot to death in a Melbourne, Florida, apartment building on August 8. Harden, 5-1 (4), last fought on April 20, 2007, when he knocked out Gregg Webb in Port St. Lucie, Florida ... Japanese promoter **Kiyoshi Yoshii** died of cystic cancer in Osaka on July 17. Yoshii, president of Osaka Teiken Promotions, was instrumental in the development of three former titleholders: WBC/WBA super flyweight **Jiro Watanabe**, WBA bantamweight **Takuya Muguruma**, and WBC bantam **Joichiro Tatsuyoshi** ... Longtime Washington, D.C., boxing commissioner **Dr. Arnold W. McKnight** died of cancer on August 1. Dr. McKnight was also a professor at Bowie State University. ■



Pacquiao: Files libel suit



Echols: Shot and busted

Quotable

"Mayweather is a very slippery fighter, he's a tricky fighter. So, obviously, we would want a smaller ring and it would be more of an interesting, exciting fight. So that's one thing we have to look at, and that's the only obstacle that's in the way of making a rematch."

—Oscar De La Hoya, discussing a possible rematch with Floyd Mayweather

"I love the UFC. I love it. If they had had that back when I was coming up, in 1966, it would have been my sport. And you know what? Nobody would have pulled the rope-a-dope on me."

—Two-time former heavyweight champion George Foreman, telling yahoo.com how he feels about mixed martial arts

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended August 14, 2007

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: No changes.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior Middleweights: Vernon Forrest (sixth last issue) switches with Kassim Ouma (fourth last issue), based on Forrest's impressive victory over Carlos Baldomir.
Welterweights: Carlos Baldomir (fifth last issue) exits to campaign at junior middleweight. Baldomir's departure moves up everyone rated six through 10 one slot each. Jackson Bonsu debuts at 10.
Junior Welterweights: No changes.
Lightweights: No changes.
Junior Lightweights: Erik Morales (fifth last issue) exits after his decision loss to WBC lightweight titlist David Diaz. "El Terrible" announced his retirement following the fight. Everyone from six to 10 advances one place, making room for Yodsanan Nanthachai at 10.
Featherweights: Injin Chi (rated second) is in a nebulous situation, since he vacated the WBC featherweight title. He has not officially retired nor has he decided to fight at junior lightweight. We will continue to monitor Chi's situation. Robert Guerrero (rated third) had his loss to Orlando Salido expunged and declared a no-contest after Salido tested positive for steroids after their November 2, 2006, fight. "The Ghost" now has only one loss on his record.
Junior Featherweights: Israel Vazquez (third last issue) becomes a two-time world champion, due to his sixth-round stoppage of Rafael Marquez. Former champion Marquez slides to number one, while Celestino Caballero (first last issue) drops to two. Daniel Ponce De Leon (fourth last issue) moves to three, replacing Somsak Sithchatchawal, who drops to four. De Leon's kayo of Rey Baustita (sixth last issue) sinks the Filipino to 10. Everyone rated seven to 10 moves up one spot.
Bantamweights: Gerry Penalosa's kayo of Jhonny Gonzalez (fifth last issue) allows him to re-enter the ratings at five, while Gonzalez drops to six. Penalosa's addition bumps down everyone rated from six to nine one peg, and pushes out Anselmo Moreno (10th last issue).
Junior Bantamweights: Z Gorres (10th last issue) switches with Pramuansak Posuwan (ninth last issue), based on Gorres' higher level of opposition
Flyweights: Luis Maldonado (ninth last issue) exits because of low caliber of opposition. Maldonado's last three opponents had a combined 19-48-2 record. Jose Lopez (10th last issue) moves up to nine, and Koki Kameda enters at 10.
Junior Flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: Rodel Mayol (seventh last issue) falls to 10 after getting knocked out by IBF junior flyweight titlist Ulises Solis (first at junior flyweight). The reshuffling enables everyone from eight to 10 to each climb one rung.
Pound-for-pound: Rafael Marquez (third last issue) drops to seven, raising Juan Manuel Marquez (fourth last issue) and Bernard Hopkins (fifth last issue) one place each and dropping Joe Calzaghe (seventh last issue) one place. Israel Vazquez debuts at five, and Marco Antonio Barrera (eighth last issue) exits.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
7. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
8. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
9. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Miguel Cotto**
    Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
TheRing-online.com

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended August 14, 2007

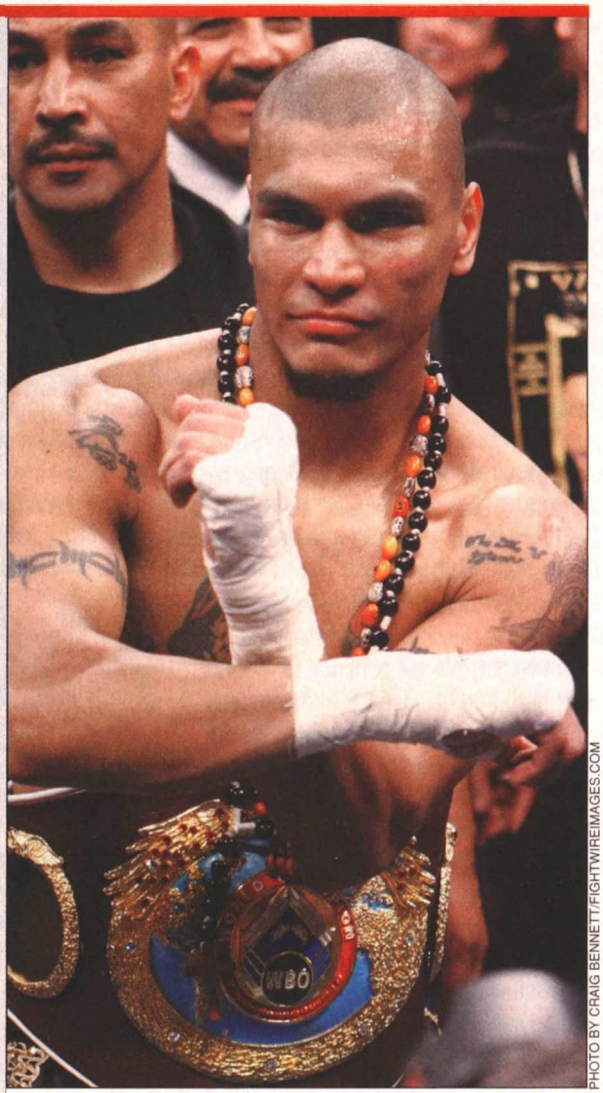


PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

Daniel Ponce De Leon jumps to third in the junior featherweight ratings

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 49-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 28-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 23-0-1 (17)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 46-1 (34)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 21-0-1 (17)
7. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
8. **CHRIS BYRD** Las Vegas, NV 40-3-1 (21)
9. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 23-1 (19)
10. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 30-1 (18)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 35-2-1 (22)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
4. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 39-2 (28)
5. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
6. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 25-3-1 (15)
7. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 29-0 (18)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
9. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
10. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 39-0-1 (20)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
3. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 20-1-1 (13)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 26-0-1 (19)
5. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
6. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 27-7-3 (10)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-3-1 (12)
8. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 33-1 (15)
9. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 24-0 (15)
10. **NICKY COOK** England 27-1(15)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 42-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-4 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 27-2 (18)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 32-1 (29)
4. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 52-2-1 (42)
5. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 24-0 (10)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 27-4 (17)
8. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 29-1 (19)
9. **BERNARD DUNNE** Ireland 24-0 (14)
10. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 23-1(18)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 22-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 57-3-2 (41)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 20-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 20-2 (16)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 52-6-2 (35)
6. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 34-6 (29)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 30-1-2 (19)
8. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-1 (16)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-1 (10)
10. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-6 (20)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 33-3 (22)

1. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 20-1 (10)
3. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 37-2 (27)
4. **DAVID HAYE**
England 19-1 (18)
5. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 27-1 (20)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 27-3-1 (18)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 19-0 (13)
8. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 23-1-1 (16)
9. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 22-5-3 (19)
10. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 17-0 (13)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 48-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 27-0 (17)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 25-4 (18)
3. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 40-3-1 (24)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 46-11-2 (31)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 24-0 (16)
6. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-3 (25)
8. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 29-2 (16)
9. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15)
10. **STIPE DREWS**
Croatia 32-1 (13)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 43-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-0 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 29-3 (22)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 22-1 (17)
4. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 20-0 (16)
5. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-3-1 (13)
6. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 25-1 (19)
7. **CARL FROCH**
England 21-0 (17)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 24-1 (17)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 31-0 (24)
10. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 22-3-2 (14)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 27-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 23-0 (18)
3. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 31-0 (28)
4. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 28-2 (24)
5. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 28-2 (12)
6. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 61-7 (41)
7. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 26-2 (12)
8. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 20-1 (14)
9. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 33-9 (13)
10. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (4)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 30-0 (25)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 33-0 (24)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-4 (37)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 34-5 (24)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-5 (25)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 28-1 (26)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
8. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 32-2 (19)
9. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)
10. **JACKSON BONSU**
Belgium 25-1 (22)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-0 (31)

1. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 35-1-2 (20)
2. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-2-1 (18)
3. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 23-1 (5)
4. **GAVIN REES**
Wales 27-0 (13)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 35-2-1 (20)
6. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 55-8-1 (47)
7. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 45-9-1 (30)
8. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
9. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 27-0-1 (11)
10. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 22-1 (12)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 34-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 32-0 (16)
2. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-3 (25)
3. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 33-1-1 (17)
4. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 31-5-1 (25)
5. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-0 (20)
6. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 25-1-1 (14)
7. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (16)
8. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 25-2 (14)
9. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 19-2 (13)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, D.C. 23-0 (17)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 44-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 47-3-1 (35)
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 63-5 (42)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 27-0 (17)
5. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 22-0 (22)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
7. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 42-5-2 (26)
8. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-2-1 (12)
9. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 25-1 (19)
10. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 50-3-1 (39)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 32-2 (17)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 30-2 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 9-1 (5)
4. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 32-3-2 (13)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 34-2-1 (25)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 46-4-1 (35)
7. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 31-6 (21)
8. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-2 (12)
9. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 27-2-1 (15)
10. **PRAMUANSAK POSUWAN**
Thailand 37-1-1 (21)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
San Leandro, CA 18-1 (11)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 31-2-2 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 65-3 (34)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 31-4-1 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 24-0-2 (15)
6. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 28-1(22)
7. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-2 (17)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 21-2 (8)
9. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
10. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 16-0 (11)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: HUGO CAZARES
Mexico 25-3-1 (19)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 25-1-2 (19)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
3. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 28-5 (14)
5. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 38-5-1 (30)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
7. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-2 (12)
8. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 17-0-2 (9)
9. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 34-6-1 (20)
10. **MUNETSUGU KAYO**
Japan 16-2 (8)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 28-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 21-1-3 (8)
3. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-1 (6)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-3 (7)
7. **ERIBERTO GEJON**
Philippines 23-1-1 (13)
8. **PORNSAWAN KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand 20-0 (15)
9. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 23-0 (8)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-2 (18)

By Jeff Ryan

Stage Whispers

For a sport that has been declared clinically dead (at least by the mainstream media) more often than Johnny Tapia, boxing sure keeps churning out enough intriguing storylines and entertaining subplots to keep these pages filled. (The editors haven't yet resorted to that 18-page photo retrospective on Marvin Camel, but it's always ready to roll, just in case.) And for a columnist, this month provided plenty of developments to dive right into as though they were hot tubs filled with leggy round-card girls.

News Flash! Arturo Gatti loses again and retires: As sad as it was to see Gatti slapped around by Alfonso Gomez, an inferior talent who couldn't punch hard enough to make a guy on a pogo stick lose his balance, at least the defeat convinced "Thunder" that he wasn't in the fight game's long-range weather forecast anymore.

What troubled me about Gatti's exit, though, was the way the end came. In my eyes, when Larry Hazzard, commissioner of the New Jersey State Athletic Control Board, came flying into the ring like some comic book superhero to save the day, he did one of the sport's great warrior's a disservice. The criticism of referee Randy Neumann is that he should have stopped the bout earlier, and, by counting over a fallen Gatti, indicated that he was going to let the battle go on even longer. Well, my impression was that Gatti wasn't going to beat the count, and even if he did, that Neumann would stop the fight when he looked in the ex-titlist's eyes. (It's worth noting that Gatti's trainer, Micky Ward, didn't try to halt the action at that moment.)

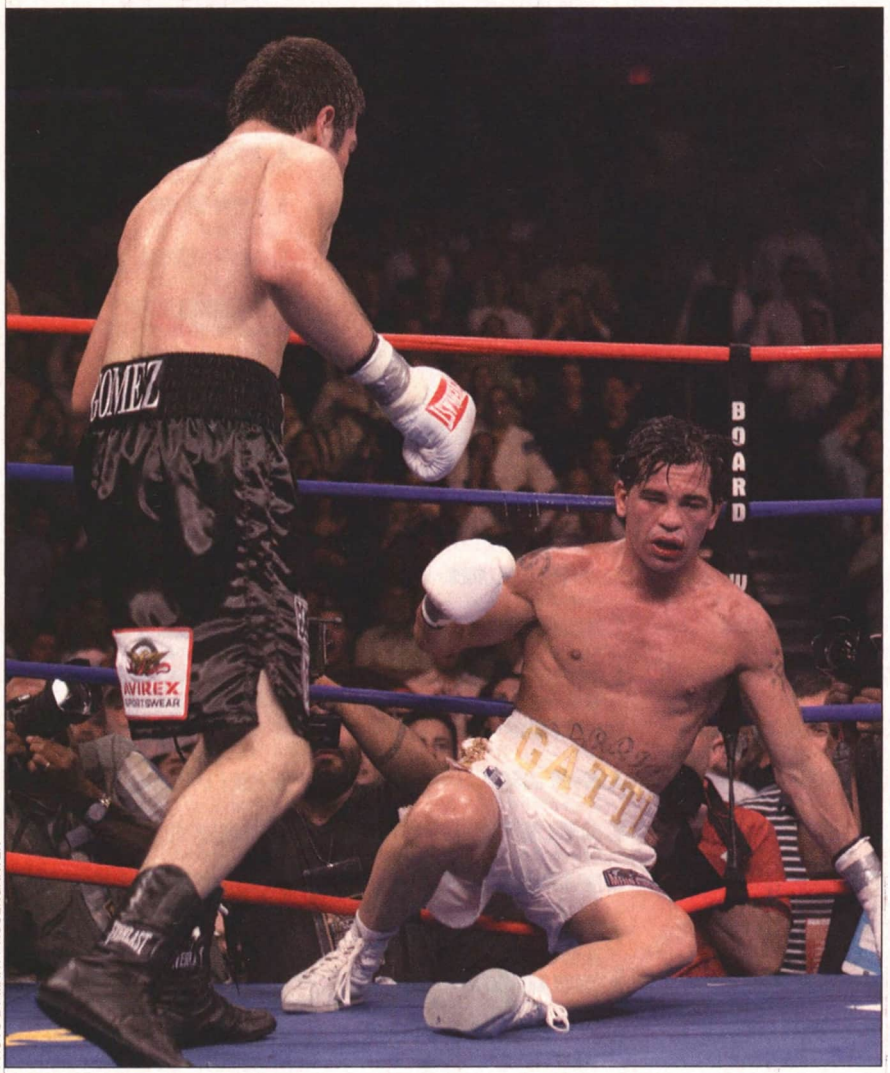


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Ryan thinks Gatti deserved to be counted out

Hazzard's charge up the ring steps denied Gatti the chance to go out the way he should have: fittingly listening to a 10-count. While it's hard to criticize a commissioner for looking out for a fighter's health, Hazzard's actions draw my suspicion. That's because, in his past life as a referee, the guy did more grandstanding than the upper deck at Dodger Stadium. Hazzard was too often the first, not the third, man in the ring, with the two fighters serving as supporting players to his disciplinarian/safety monitor/look-at-me act.

News Flash! Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton is set: Send the agate type for THE RING ALMANAC to the printer right now. This is going to be the Fight of the Year for 2007. Ego, greed, pride, macho posturing, and a natural aversion to risk-taking were all put aside by the two camps in order to create a superfight the sport is clamoring to see.

Thank the fistic gods that these

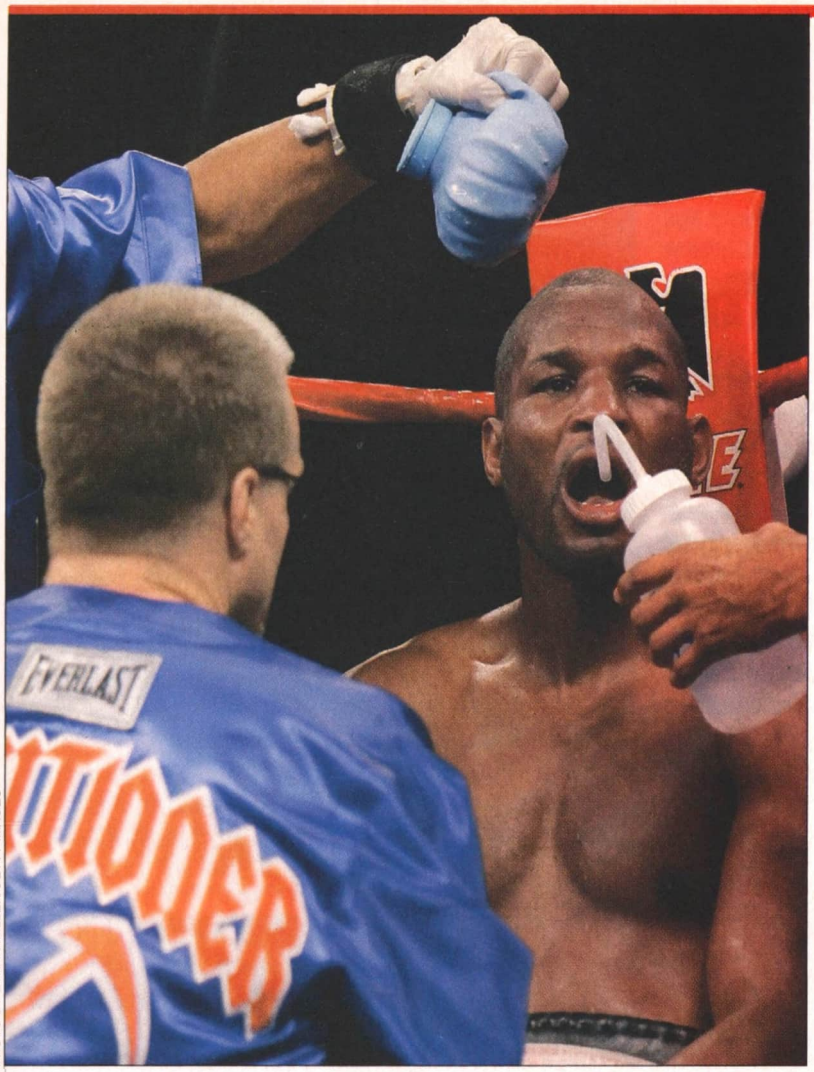


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Did B-Hop fill his water bottle at the Fountain of Youth?

two guys campaign within striking weight of each other. There's a great scene in *Raging Bull*, where middleweight Jake LaMotta is standing in his kitchen and bemoaning the fact that he'll never get to face heavyweight king Joe Louis. As great a matchup as Mayweather-Hatton is, it's merely a consolation prize thrown to us by those gods who feel bad that they can't deliver Mayweather-Hopkins. *That's* the main event of my pound-for-pound dream card. The semi is Manny Pacquiao-Miguel Cotto, and the undercard is filled out with Wladimir Klitschko-Israel Vazquez, Joe Calzaghe-Shane Mosley and Juan Manuel Marquez-Mikkel Kessler. Remember, now, this is a *pound-for-pound* dream card, so don't be thinking I'm beginning to lose it.

If Erik Morales-David Diaz commands $44.95, just imagine what my card would cost? A hint: You'd have to cash in your 401(k). But if I promised Max Kellerman wouldn't be on the broadcast team, wouldn't it be worth it?

News Flash! Bernard Hopkins outpoints Winky Wright: Point out that "B-Hop" was better accustomed to the weight, fought dirty, and was more workmanlike than wonderful, and you'll get no argument from me. But don't forget to also mention that Hopkins is 42, he hadn't competed in 13 months, and he beat a guy, in Wright, who hadn't lost in seven years despite tangling with the likes of Shane Mosley, Felix Trinidad, Jermain Taylor, and Ike Quartey.

Hopkins is truly remarkable. He's not just pitching in his 40s, like some lefty relief specialist brought in to face one batter. He's still winning Cy Young Awards like an aging Roger Clemens and tossing no-hitters like a wrinkled Nolan Ryan. After decisioning Wright, Hopkins said he thought he could fight another four years. Forgive me for not laughing at him, but the last time "The Executioner" was the butt of my jokes, he ended up kicking the butt of Antonio Tarver, my pick in their battle.

By the way, doesn't Taylor piss you off? Here's a guy who'd squeak out a split decision or fight a no-knockdown draw if he met Laila Ali, yet he somehow managed to hang the only losses on Hopkins' record in the past 14 years. Talk about being unworthy. We speak of Hopkins now as though he's Superman. What would we be calling him had he dominated Taylor?

Funny thing about Hopkins: *He's* the old guy, yet it's his detractors who are the ones with the frown lines.

News Flash! Vinny Paz is in trouble again: A one-time sweetheart of a kid, who lived with his parents, uttered some of the funniest quotes of the past 20 years, turned himself into Rhode Island's most recognizable sports franchise, and epitomized courage while overcoming everything from busted noses and sliced eyebrows to a broken neck suffered in a car accident, has turned into an embarrassment for the sport.

In July, Paz was charged with domestic simple assault and domestic disorderly conduct after allegedly giving his girlfriend a bloody nose. That would be bad enough if Paz didn't already have a history of pleading no contest to drunken driving and assaulting a police officer.

As someone who can't stand the celebrity culture, it pains me to say this, but there's only one thing that may save Paz from his steady downward spiral. The same thing Mike Tyson ought to be pursuing: a reality television show. With cameras following Paz around, there wouldn't be any lulls in the action as far as the viewers are concerned. And maybe Paz would be inspired to stay out of trouble. (Is it my imagination, or has "The Pazmanian Devil" had far more problems since legally changing his name to Vinny Paz than he ever did when he was known as Vincent Pazienza? *Hmmm.*)

There's a waste of an hour, *uh,* I mean a show on VH1 right now that's called *Scott Baio Is 45 ... And Single.* Yes, *that* Scott Baio. Chachi from *Happy Days.* Hell, Paz had some semblance of a career far more recently than Baio did. Perhaps the fighter could call his new show, *Vinny Paz Is 44 ... And Out On Bail.* ■

By Ivan Goldman

Forget MMA, The Real Enemy Is Us

Mixed martial arts remind me of those guys in droopy pants who want to show everyone their boxer shorts. I mean, it's a free country, but I'd rather watch something else. A good clean fight, for example.

Let me phrase this as diplomatically as I can. MMA competitions are dopey, sordid spectacles aimed at simple-minded people who like things uncomplicated and repulsive, like Britney Spears, for example, or anything on the E! channel. Say "Sweet Science," and you lose them on the second word.

Years ago they made a gripping, futuristic movie starring James Caan about a fictional team sport called rollerball that ratcheted up violence to the point of losers' certain death. Ironically, a dumbed-down remake came out in 2002 that nixed boxing-like nuance in favor of grotesque violence for its own sake. And guess what. The smarter first film made a ton of money and the junk version bombed.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Goossen says boxing is responsible for its own woes

Now we're being warned absurd contests that mix boxing, wrestling, kicking, choking, and bending limbs the wrong way will eat the fight game's lunch. Boxing promoter Gary Shaw has dipped his toe into the MMA sludge, along with HBO and Showtime.

When new things come along, there are always fools ready to predict the end of what already exists. Radio was supposed to be dead decades ago. When I was a kid, futurists told us we'd all be flying our own helicopters to work by now. Boxing has hung in there since it became an Olympic sport in 688 B.C., and I don't see it going anywhere.

A California referee who works MMA matches told me the crowds are "young and white." That's a fickle bunch with the loyalty of snails. (Young, white people reading this are of course excluded from this generalization.) If MMA survives, it will coexist with boxing, like Danielle Steel and Dostoyevsky in the same library.

Said promoter Dan Goossen: "We've got to concentrate on our own business, not concentrate on other businesses. We've been our own worst enemy."

In what way?

"Whenever you try to prevent the biggest fights from happening," he replied. "Fans want to see the best."

When Bob Arum and Don King had so many of the top fighters, asked Goossen, "How many times did their fighters fight? Very seldom. That's like the National League not playing the American League. You've got to put the best against the best. If there were no World Series and Super Bowl at the end of the regularly scheduled 162 games of baseball and 16 NFL games," fans, he said, would take a hike.

Goossen hopes boxing is leaving those punishing business feuds behind. Golden Boy and Arum, who'd been fighting over promotional rights to Manny Pacquiao and other issues finally realized that "going to the court system was a waste of energy, money, and time. Look at it. Who's the beneficiary of them finally settling their differences? Fighters and fans. Everybody else too. Promoters, networks."

The reconciled Arum and Golden Boy put together Pacquiao and Marco Antonio Barrera, October 6 in Las Vegas and Miguel Cotto and Shane Mosley, November 10 in Madison Square Garden.

"Same thing happened when I settled the case with Bob over Antonio Margarito and Paul Williams," Goossen said. "The fighters made their biggest paydays ever, and it was a great sold-out event. That sort of fight brings in fans by the truckload. So who cuts in on boxing? Us. Not MMA.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

The Top Rank-Golden Boy truce has led to Cotto's superfight with Mosley

"If MMA becomes successful, great, I'm happy for them. And if they're not, I'm not gonna light cigars. They're two different sports. That's the bottom line." But being a boxing guy, Goossen couldn't resist just a little needling. "There's not an MMA guy anywhere in the world who can handle just an average boxing guy," he said. "But no boxer in the world can wrestle any of these guys."

I'm not so sure. Ever seen a John Ruiz fight?

Though Goossen makes sense, it's hard to see how boxing can stay center ring when sports sections around the country barely know it exists. The nation's top three metropolitan dailies—*The New York Times, Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*—all declined to send reporters to Las Vegas to cover Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright for the light heavyweight championship of the world. That's inexcusable. Newspaper owners complain a lot, but most big papers make tons of money, and their sports sections in particular are awash in funds. You can bet all three of those papers cover all road trips made by local teams, including college level.

And then, of course, there's golf. The *L.A. Times*, which has been known to ignore local boxing shows altogether, printed an entire extra section—10 pages—to cover the results of the U.S. Open, a real, edge-of-your seat drama played on a sprawling, bulldozed section of formerly useful land in Pennsylvania.

But I'll say this for golf. It gets the scores right. Team sports too, for the most part. Can you imagine a baseball

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

A number of major newspapers failed to staff Hopkins-Wright

player signing with a particular team because he figures the franchise has more influence over umpires? In boxing, you don't have to imagine it. It happens.

Floyd vs. Little Guy: A while ago when the magazine asked me to assess Floyd Mayweather's potential opponents, I didn't even mention junior welter Ricky Hatton because in his one welterweight battle, against Luis Collazo, the "Hitman" was such an inferior model of his typical junior welter self, I figured he'd wait at least a couple more years before trying anything like that again. Now the fight, fueled by millions in purse money, is on for December 8. But RING champion Mayweather's tough enough to beat when he's your own size. A smaller opponent, even a particularly strong one like Hatton, brings the proverbial knife to a gunfight.

Fans, of course, tend to root for the smaller guy, particularly when he's pitted against Mayweather, who eagerly seized the role of villain in HBO's *24/7* series before his blockbuster against Oscar De La Hoya. And Floyd isn't getting any sweeter. He recently declined an interview for this magazine because the editors wouldn't promise him the cover. His loss was Hatton's gain.

Beristain Daffy?: For years Juan Manuel Marquez' manager-trainer Nacho Beristain has been hammered for turning down $750,000 for a rematch against Manny Pacquiao, then flying off to Indonesia last year to lose a hometown decision to Chris John for $25,000.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Marquez and Pacquiao have unfinished business

But when Golden Boy Promotions publicist Ramiro Gonzalez was chief boxing writer for *La Opinion,* he tracked down Beristain about this seemingly wacky series of decisions, and Beristain told him the contract for the first Pacquiao match stipulated Marquez would earn a minimum of $1.2-million for a rematch. "To them it was a matter of principle," Gonzalez told me. "Instead, they took $25,000 to fight John, and they took it with pride."

Beristain's story didn't get out there because he neither reads nor speaks English, so he knows little of what's said about him north of the border.

"That's all the money that was there," explained Lee Samuels of Top Rank, which was Marquez' promoter at the time. "It was $1.5-million split down the middle between Pacquiao and Marquez." Perhaps there was a Spanglish communication failure.

Just the fact that Barrera wants Pacquiao again tells you what kind of man he is. But clearly it's Marquez, not Barrera, who earned the shot—for fighting Pac-Man to a draw in their first match and then defeating Barrera.

You could spend your whole life trying to put together the puzzle of who's ducking whom, and at the end, you'd still

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Is Hatton too small to beat Mayweather?

have extra pieces. In this case, all three fighters are particularly fearless, and it's most likely no one's ducking anybody. Gonzalez says Pacquiao preferred the match with Barrera. But Pacquiao and Marquez have unfinished business that ought to be settled.

Two Brutal Contests: Although HBO's Bob Papa reported Oscar Larios and Czar Amonsot both suffered brain hemorrhages against Jorge Linares and Michael Katsidis, respectively, and were leaving the sport, Golden Boy's Gonzalez said he knew of no official tests saying so. Should they want to return, prefight physicals will tell the story.

"Larios told me he's saved some money, he has a little property, and he'll decide in about three months whether he's coming back," said Gonzalez, who agreed Larios has had too many tough fights. "As for Amonsot, we'll just have to see," he said.

Not Again: Boycotting the 1980 Moscow Olympics was one of the dumbest things Jimmy Carter ever did. He accomplished nothing diplomatically, while ruining not one, but two Olympics, because the Soviets and their satellites turned around and boycotted the L.A. Games in '84. Boxers were only some of the devastated athletes. Our 1980 team members forfeited the right to compete for Olympic medals, and our '84 team members couldn't box against strong teams of Soviets, Cubans, and East Germans.

But New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, during a summer debate of Democratic presidential candidates, said the U.S. needs "to lean on China, which has enormous leverage over Darfur. And if the Chinese don't want to do this, we say to them, maybe we won't go to the Olympics."

Richardson may be a fine person, but if he still can't see the enormity of Carter's blunder 27 years after the fact, he should stay in New Mexico.

Magoo: Referee Randy Neumann and the corner of Arturo Gatti stood around with their thumbs up their butts while Alfonso Gomez gratuitously pounded national icon Gatti. This I learned from associate William Dettloff, who was kind enough to keep the Magoo watch while I was out of the country. Commissioner Larry Hazzard had to jump in. For shame. ■

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Will the beating Larios took from Jorge Linares end his career?

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

So, do you think Kermit Cintron is excited about the knockout he just scored over Walter Matthysse? Either he's about to go into the full-fledged Hulkamania victory posing routine, or he's attempting flight. The only thing that's for certain: Kermit hasn't been slacking on his lat pulldowns in the weight room.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

After scoring a nice win over Koba Gogoladze, there's nothing Scottish junior lightweight Alex Arthur wants more than a hug from his son, Alex Jr. And we suspect there's nothing the youngster wants less than to get drenched in his daddy's sweat. But he's a good boy, so he hugged his father anyway. In fact, he's such a good boy that we won't tease the kid and call him "Opie."

What do Rafael Marquez and promoter Gary Shaw have in common? Neither one is the junior featherweight champion of the world right now. But at the time this photo was taken, shortly before Marquez' unsuccessful defense against Israel Vazquez, the Mexican was in possession of The Ring championship belt. And the good thing about reigning for only five months is that it doesn't give you a whole lot of time to get attached to the hardware.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

A good jab is important, a potent left hook to the body is nice ... but nothing intimidates in the boxing ring quite like the ability to levitate. After scoring a second-round TKO over Ted Muller recently, super middleweight Librado Andrade basically did the Naseem Hamed magic carpet routine, minus the magic carpet. It was almost impressive enough to make up for his lousy performance against Mikkel Kessler.

PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Separating Ricardo Mayorga from Fernando Vargas may prevent the Nicaraguan from starting a fight, but it can't prevent him from acting like a lunatic. After a brawl erupted at the L.A. press conference, the fighters were kept apart at the New York presser, which Mayorga used as an excuse to stand on a chair and make funny faces. We will give Mayorga points, however, for the cool retro Roberto Duran T-shirt.

Okay, so the rules say you're not supposed to hit your opponent while he's down ... but what if you're both down? Brazil's Everton Lopes cocked a fist after he and Jonathan Batista of the Dominican Republic tackled each other to the mat in their Pan Am Games lightweight bout, but he resisted the urge to take it any further, and went on to win a decision.

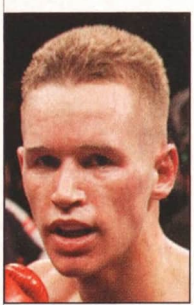
PHOTO BY OMAR TORRES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

New Faces

Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

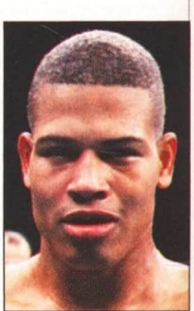
A Look Back

What have our most recent "New Faces" been doing since being featured in THE RING? An update:



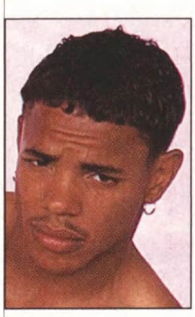
Jason Litzau, junior lightweight (Spring 2005 issue): "The American Boy" appeared fast tracked for stardom, or at least looking at a title shot sometime in 2008. Then he ran into Jose Andres Hernandez on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* on December 16, 2006. After surviving a first-round knockdown, Litzau decided to go into boxing mode. Hernandez withstood Litzau's best salvos over the next six rounds, then Litzau got careless again in the eighth. Substantially ahead on all three judges' scorecards, he tried to turn into a slugger again, and instead was slugged into a knockout defeat. Litzau has since won two comeback fights, beating Aldo Valtierra by unanimous decision and knocking out Emmanuel Lucero in two. Litzau has an action style, but his suspect chin and concentration lapses could curtail his title dreams.

Record: 22-1 (19)



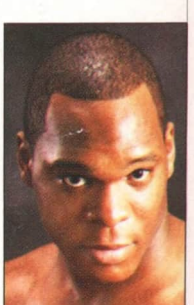
Giovanni Lorenzo, middleweight (June 2005 issue): Lorenzo is one of the more exciting punchers of this group. A tall middleweight, at 6', he already has a couple of quality victories, stopping previously undefeated Dennis Sharpe in the first round, in January 2005, and then finishing Archak TerMeliksetian in the eighth, in March 2006. But he hasn't had the kind of progression that he should have since vanquishing TerMeliksetian. Instead, Lorenzo has continued fighting the usual standbys, often relegated to filling a role on Arturo Gatti undercards. He seems to have stagnated, while Main Events tries to figure out how to move him.

Record: 25-0 (17)



Verquan Kimbrough, junior welterweight (July 2005 issue): Kimbrough was a featherweight two years ago but has added 14 pounds since first appearing in THE RING. He made the jump after suffering his first and only defeat, getting stopped by Jose Alberto Gonzalez in four rounds as a featherweight in April 2006. Kimbrough used the old bromide that he was weak from the weight loss. Adding more insult was that the crushing defeat came on Kimbrough's own turf, at the Mountaineer Race Track, in Chester, West Virginia. Since then, he's gone 3-0, all decision victories at or around 140 pounds. "The Show" might feel comfortable at 140, but the show won't go on if he can't take a punch against the larger foes he'll be facing at junior welter.

Record: 17-1 (7)

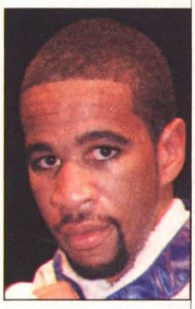


Raphael Butler, heavyweight (Summer 2005 issue): Butler's been active, that's for sure. He's fought more than anyone on this list. He's also lost more than anyone, moving from sought-after prospect to what could easily be defined as journeyman status. He's 16-4 since he appeared in THE RING, with three of the four losses coming by knockout. Butler fumbled a great opportunity to sell himself in April 2007, when he was given a shot on Showtime. He was knocked out by sometime-actor/sometime-boxer Art Binkowski in the eighth round of a scheduled eight-rounder, despite being comfortably ahead on all scorecards.

Record: 26-4 (21)

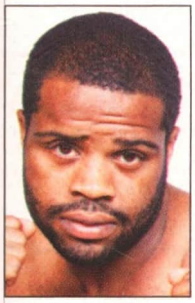
Rodel Mayol, junior flyweight (August 2005 issue): Mayol is the second-most accomplished fighter of this group, behind IBF flyweight titlist Nonito Donaire. Someone could quickly scroll down Mayol's record after hearing that and say, *huh?* Mayol's docket shows that he has lost two of his last three fights, but what has to come under strong consideration is that both losses came against world-class opponents in title fights. Mayol remains one of four "New Faces" in this group that are rated by THE RING, sitting at number 10 at strawweight, after losing by eighth-round TKO to IBF junior flyweight titlist Ulises Solis in early-August. Mayol blazed out to a 22-0 start, before losing a decision to WBC minimumweight titlist Eagle Kyowa in May 2006. Mayol is 26 and has acquitted himself well at the elite level. There's no reason he can't work his way back into title consideration again soon.

Record: 23-2 (18)



Lamont Peterson, junior welterweight (October 2005 issue): Peterson remains very active, fighting 10 times since appearing in THE RING, including a quality victory over John Brown (KO 8) this past May 25. Lamont seems to be progressing briskly, helped along by Shelly Finkel's managerial acumen. What Peterson needs is more of a punch. His knockout percentage has shrunk since knocking out over 50 percent of his first 11 opponents. His 10 most recent victories include just three inside the distance.

Record: 21-0 (9)

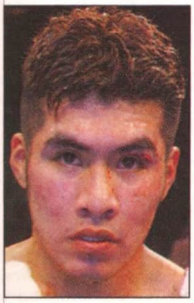


Derek Ennis, middleweight (November 2005 issue): Ennis started well, winning his first seven fights when he appeared as a "New Face." Since then, he's gone 5-1-1, with his one draw coming against Maxell Taylor, the first fighter Ennis faced with a winning record. His one loss came on a knockout defeat to Allen Conyers, the second fighter Ennis met with a winning record. Sense a pattern here? Ennis had a brief but distinguished amateur career. He has credible power. But Ennis' enemy so far early in his career seems to be himself. He was found guilty of taking Conyers too lightly and got caught. Hopefully, it's a lesson learned as Ennis attempts to rebuild.

Record: 12-1-1 (9)

Nick Casal, lightweight (December 2005 issue): Soon after appearing in THE RING, Casal's career began careening out of control. He tested positive for cocaine after beating Martinus Clay in June 2005. In light of the positive test, the Clay victory was changed to a no-contest. There must be something about June that gets Casal going, because a year later, in June 2006, he was charged with third-degree assault and second-degree harassment of a woman. The drama of Casal's personal life has led to some long layoffs. He had to take a five-month hiatus after the positive test in '05 and four months off after the assault charges in '06. Casal is 2-1-1 in his last four fights, and he seems headed to Journeymenville.

Record: 12-1-1 (12)



Aaron Garcia, featherweight (February 2006 issue): Based on his extensive amateur background, Golden Boy Promotions had such high hopes for Garcia, envisioning a title shot by early-2007. But soon after appearing as a "New Face," Garcia exited the undefeated ranks. Saul Ochoa, the first fighter with a winning record Garcia met, stopped him in three rounds. That occurred on May 6, 2006. Garcia hasn't fought since, nor did he have a fight scheduled as of press time. Garcia severed his promotional ties with Golden Boy, putting his career on hold, but he said he is looking to fight again later this year or in early-2008.

Record: 7-1 (2)

(Continued on 122)

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Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

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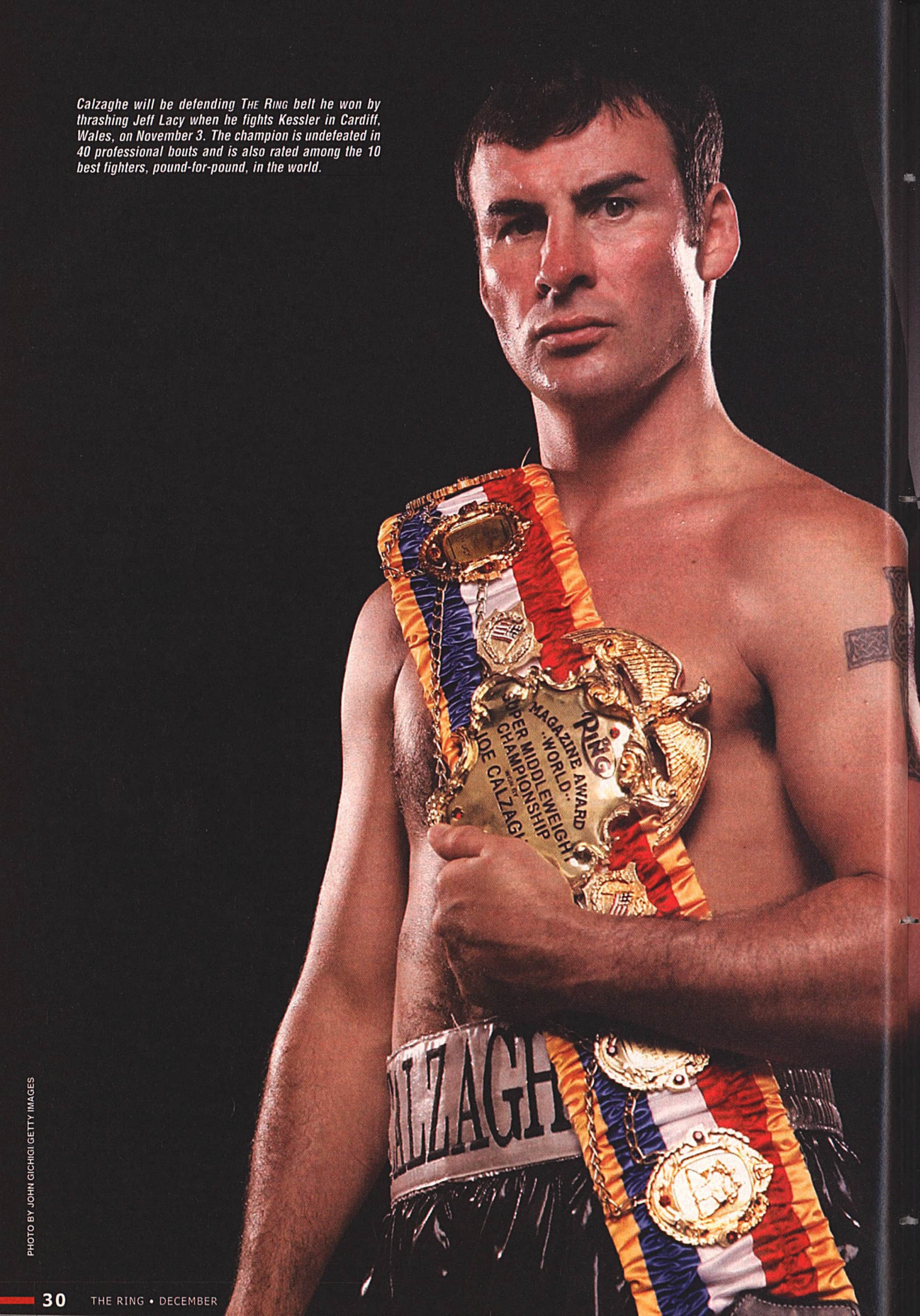


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe will be defending THE RING belt he won by thrashing Jeff Lacy when he fights Kessler in Cardiff, Wales, on November 3. The champion is undefeated in 40 professional bouts and is also rated among the 10 best fighters, pound-for-pound, in the world.

JOE CALZAGHE GETS WHAT HE DEMANDS

"I Want To Fight Mikkel Kessler Next . . . Nobody Else!"

By Brian Doogan

It was sealed on a Tuesday morning in June at promoter Frank Warren's Sports Network offices in Hertfordshire, England. The contracts still had to be signed and multiple negotiations remained. There was neither a venue nor a TV deal in place. But the meeting between Warren and Joe Calzaghe was conclusive. "I want to fight Mikkel Kessler next," Calzaghe said to Warren. "Nobody else." It was that definitive and that simple. One of the most competitive and significant bouts in boxing today was made.

For many more years than he has held THE RING's super middleweight title, which he won by producing a virtuoso performance against Florida's Jeff Lacy in March 2006, Calzaghe has been the outstanding exponent in the 168-pound division. Those experts in the art of hindsight—almost all of whom picked the American to lick the Welshman, even to stop him—went out of their way afterward to emphasize how Lacy had been overrated (predictably, they neglected to acknowledge by whom), but there were many more savvy observers who recognized the merit in what they had witnessed.

PHOTO BY TORSTEN BLACKWOOD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kessler is also undefeated, having beaten all 39 opponents he's faced since turning pro in 1998. He is the holder of several alphabet straps and is THE RING's number-one super middleweight contender.

Sugar Ray Leonard, who watched the fight in Eddie Murphy's Los Angeles home, described Calzgahe's display of "pure boxing" as "masterful ... a boxing clinic". Hugh McIlvanney, whose judgment has been honed through 50 years of covering the fights from ringside for *The Observer* newspaper in Britain and, more recently, the *Sunday Times*, called it "one of the greatest displays of superb technique, confidence and fighting intelligence a British boxer has delivered in a major contest."

That Calzaghe had existed in such relative anonymity through the majority of his 10 years as WBO titleholder was more an indictment of the sport, its fractured administration, and all the vested interests of the myriad people who draw from its coffers. It was no indication of the fighter.

Unorthodox, reclusive, and a southpaw too, Calzaghe has been easy to overlook amid more glamorous peers. If unification bouts had happened earlier in his career, he would surely be more acclaimed now, for he has outlasted all of his fellow titleholders, even Germany's Sven Ottke, who defended the IBF super middleweight belt 21 times and retired undefeated. Various efforts to bring the two together failed, though Calzaghe, clearly, was the more versatile, more explosive, more formidable fighter. The German would not have brought enough game to the ring. So Calzaghe defended the spurious WBO title 20 times instead, while winning THE RING and IBF belts in his 18th defense and, as with Bernard Hopkins, grudgingly gained respect through his sheer longevity.

Oscar De La Hoya has marveled at his drawing power. "Joe brought out 35,000 people [for his most recent fight against Peter Manfredo in April, so he's a star in this sport, no question," the "Golden Boy" said days later in Puerto Rico. And Hopkins, who declined to face him in the past, called out Calzaghe after his defeat of Winky Wright in July.

"Hopkins can just get in the line and wait because of all the messing around he has caused me," Calzaghe retorted. "I was all set to fight him [in 2002] and he doubled his financial demands after at first agreeing to the fight. Besides, why do I need to go to America and fight in front of a half-empty arena? Hopkins and Wright are supposed to be two of the top pound-for-pound fighters, yet their fight didn't sell out the Mandalay Bay [in Las Vegas]. It drew something like 9,000 people. My fight against Kessler, unlike the dancing and holding that Hopkins and Wright engaged in, will be a real fight. We're on course to sell over 60,000 tickets, and this is a far more meaningful fight. Wright had never even boxed as a light heavyweight, whereas Kessler is the other top guy in the division, second only behind me, and he's my biggest challenge out there.

"That's why it was the only fight I wanted at this time. I'm 35 and, although I feel like I'm 25, I'm realistic. I don't have years left in this business, I have a certain number of fights, and after the fiasco of Manfredo (whom Calzaghe exposed inside three one-sided rounds) and Jermain Taylor's unwillingness to step up to the plate, this was the only bout in which I was interested. I was even willing to go to Copenhagen to make it happen, that's how much I wanted it."

Warren wanted home advantage, however, and got his way. Ultimately, this could prove to be particularly significant, for as much as Calzaghe's stock has risen in the past 18 months, so too has Kessler's. The 28-year-old pride of Denmark, who revels in his "Viking Warrior" nickname, has established a fervent following in a country with a long history of success in conflict. In boxing, the Vikings have proved less successful, though for the vast majority of his career Ayub Kalule, who lost the WBA light middleweight title against Leonard in 1981, boxed out of Denmark, and Johnny and Jimmi Bredahl both claimed WBO belts with Johnny also winning the WBA bantamweight title in 2002. Kessler, however, is a far more authentic talent, unbeaten in 39 bouts with 29 stoppage victories. His amateur career was unexceptional, 44 wins in 47 bouts, and he collected a handful of Nordic titles. Far more impressive is the way in which he persevered in order to pursue a pro career.

The young Kessler was a self-confessed "street boy," at his happiest with a football at his feet and playing competitive games with his friends in the park. His mother, Ann Patricia, who was born in England, split up with his father, Ole, when Kessler was still a child and he split his time between both parents, spending much of it in the Haraldsborg pub that his father owned. He had held down jobs from boyhood, paper routes, waiting in restaurants, dishwashing, even working in a kindergarten and nursery school, for his parents were not affluent.

When he left school at 16, Kessler became an apprentice mechanic with

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe's dominant display against the previously unbeaten Lacy in March 2005 helped push him to the forefront of British sportsmen. His autobiography was the top selling sports book in the U.K. this summer and a crowd of 60,000 is expected for the Kessler fight.

Mercedes. His boxing apprenticeship quickly curtailed his work with cars, however, and when it came down to a choice between Mercedes and an offer to turn professional, with the team of Mogens Palle and his daughter, Bettina, promoting him, the decision was easy.

He learned his trade largely in Denmark, but became friendly with former IBF super featherweight titleholder Carlos "El Famoso" Hernandez and lived with him and his family in Los Angeles for a period to get quality sparring. In November 2004, he won the WBA super middleweight title when Puerto Rican Manny Siaca remained on his stool after seven rounds. His pedigree became apparent through successful defenses against Anthony Mundine in Australia and Eric Lucas of Canada.

In October 2006, Kessler knocked out Germany's Markus Beyer in the third round to win the WBC title, and the spectacular right hand he landed on Beyer's jaw aired on HBO to accompany Calzaghe's less impressive world title

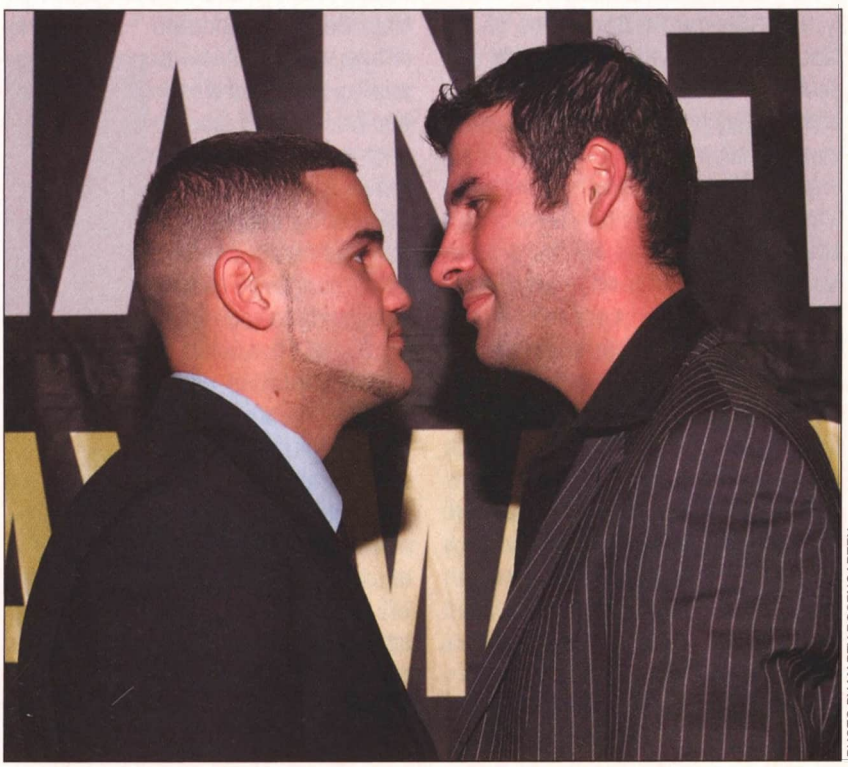


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Peter Manfredo Jr. was up to the task when it came to trading mean looks with Calzaghe at a prefight press conference in New York City. But when the American climbed into the ring to face Calzaghe in Wales, he was quickly dispatched.

PHOTO BY MOGENS FLINDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

American fans are not that familiar with Kessler, as his March 2007 decision over Librado Andrade is the only one of his fights that has been shown in its entirety in the United States. He is, however, popular in Denmark, where approximately 20,000 paying customers turned out to watch him beat Andrade.

defense against the strong and awkward Cameroonian Sakio Bika. In reality, the 35-year-old Beyer was on his last legs and, while the punch that decked him for the count was powerful and eye-catching, the veteran German most certainly was not. He was a sitting target for Kessler's right hand when the Dane set him up with his strong jab. Calzaghe will be a much less compliant proposition than either Beyer or Librado Andrade, whom Kessler dominated in every single round of an overwhelming shutout in his most recent outing in March, which was televised in full on HBO. Calzaghe's trainer and father, Enzo, was an interested observer of both bouts and was not blown away by Kessler's apparently spectacular performances, both of which drew more than 20,000 people to Copenhagen's Parken Stadium.

"It's very interesting because I'm hearing a lot about what Kessler can do—'He can do this, he can do that'—but any fighter can only do what he's allowed to do and, if you wanted to make Kessler look impressive, you couldn't have chosen better opponents than Beyer or Andrade," said Enzo. "Beyer was shot, no doubt about it, and Andrade stood in front of Kessler the whole night, absorbing shot after shot, and he came back with nothing himself. Now, if you want to judge Kessler on that form, that's fine, but don't tell me for one second that those fights bear any resemblance to what he's going to face in a fight with Joe Calzaghe. There's just no comparison.

"I'm not taking anything away from Kessler. He's a good boxer, he can whack a bit, and he's never been beaten. But he has never been in the ring against a boxer like Joe, not even close. Joe would have to have a piece of rope tied to each of his feet and both his hands to be as immobile and labored as Beyer and Andrade were.

"Look, Kessler's very predictable in what he does, setting up the right hand with his jab and doing everything in straight lines. Joe is going to be hitting him with loads of punches and coming at him from all angles, and this is something that Kessler will never have dealt with before. He's a little taller than Joe (6'1" to 6'), but it's nothing significant, and we saw what Joe did twice against Mario Veit, who was taller than Kessler. In any case, I've heard it all before. Jeff Lacy was going to come over here and do all sorts of things to Joe, and when it came right down to it he didn't do any of it. It's an entirely different thing for any fighter getting in the ring with Joe Calzaghe and, with a crowd of 60,000 at the Milennium Stadium, it will be something Kessler has never experienced before in his life."

Unquestionably, Calzaghe will bring more ambition and proficiency to the proceedings than either Beyer or Andrade were capable of producing, but Kessler too is a more challenging proposition than Manfredo or Bika and even Lacy. In his autobiography, *No Ordinary Joe*, Calzaghe acknowledged that Kessler is "possibly as good a fighter as Lacy was, maybe better," but he added the caveat that the Dane is "largely

PHOTO BY FRIEDMANN VOGEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe's father/trainer, Enzo, was not impressed with Kessler's kayo of Germany's Markus Beyer to unify the WBA and WBC 168-pound titles. He believes that Beyer was a shot fighter going into the October 2006 bout and that the result proved little.

untested." His points victory over Mundine in the Australian's hometown of Sydney is probably his biggest win, but Siaca also beat Mundine and a 38-year-old Yoshinori Nishizawa from Japan knocked him down. Moreover, Ottke, who stopped only six opponents in 34 pro fights, knocked him out with one punch. Mundine, who regained the WBA title when Kessler was elevated to what the alphabet organization ludicrously calls a "super champion," is a flawed fighter, so the form must be treated accordingly.

But Kessler is convinced that Calzaghe is not impregnable.

"Calzaghe is a good technical boxer, but when he comes forward he has a tendency to look down, and this is never good," Kessler suggested. "You need always to keep your eyes on your opponent. I watched him against Kabary Salem, who hit him with a lucky punch and he went down, and it wasn't a great performance. I also boxed on the same bill as Calzaghe on the undercard of Mike Tyson-Brian Nielsen when he fought a nobody [Will McIntyre]. The key to fighting him, I've always believed, would be to box smart, and this is what I will do."

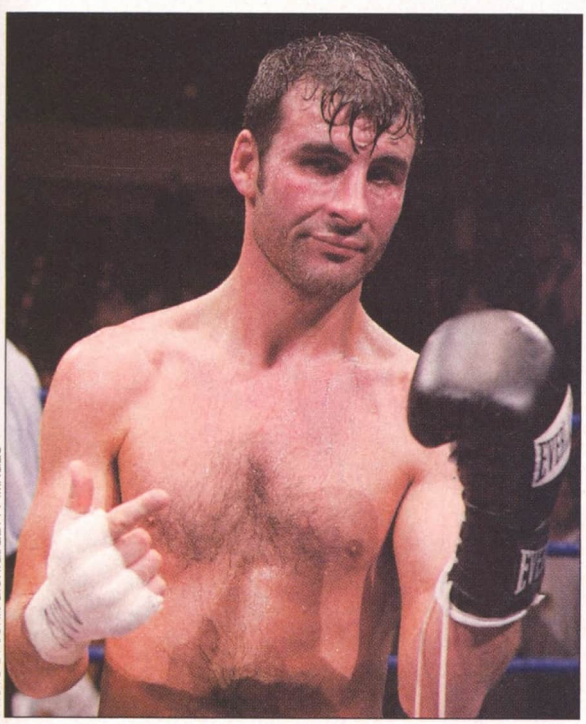


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

An unhappy-looking Calzaghe points at his injured left hand following his 2005 victory over Evan Ashira. The champion's chronic hand problems could conceivably play a role in his showdown with Kessler.

Calzaghe's hands have let him down in many fights, particularly his left, and this is one bout in which he will need all of his tools. When he fought Evans Ashira in September 2005, he broke his left hand in the fourth round and fought for the remainder of the bout just throwing his right. The possibility of injury is a concern.

"It's always there but, listen, Sugar Ray Leonard told me that he had a lot of problems with his hands too, but he had to just grin and bear it, and he didn't do too badly, did he?" Calzaghe countered.

Kessler has also suffered injury problems, mostly notably to his back, but this is just another obstacle that fighters have to overcome. For this bout, Calzaghe will earn a purse of close to $5-million and Kessler almost the same, and the possibility of fireworks inside a frenzied stadium justifies the rich reward. After 43 successive wins and 32 stoppages, a win for Calzaghe will cement his legacy, while for Kessler, it would herald an exciting new era in the division because he is young enough to stay active for several more years. Calzaghe may be content with two more fights, with Hopkins a potential retirement bout, if he repels Kessler's challenge.

"Being successful in boxing is about staying focused and hungry, and I'm still unbeaten after all these years and hungry for more," Calzaghe declared. "He might be ambitious and hungry too, but no more hungry than me. I've always been a winner and I need to win. I don't even think about losing, because it would be the most terrible thing in the world, like a death. For me, it's about cementing my legacy now. 'Joe Calzaghe, he could fight,' that's what I'd like people to be able to say. 'Look how long he was undefeated and when will somebody else do that?' I'm not a person who craves attention and thinks, 'Look at me, look at me.' I like my privacy and I probably couldn't handle it if I was a footballer or a film star and had paparazzi trailing me everywhere. I'd be one of those people who would have to move away from the spotlight because I wouldn't like it. I just don't crave it. I'm a fighter and all I crave is respect for being a fighter. Maybe 10 years down the line when people look back, I'll be more appreciated."

If Calzaghe beats Kessler, it will come much sooner than that. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

CALZAGHE vs. KESSLER

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING

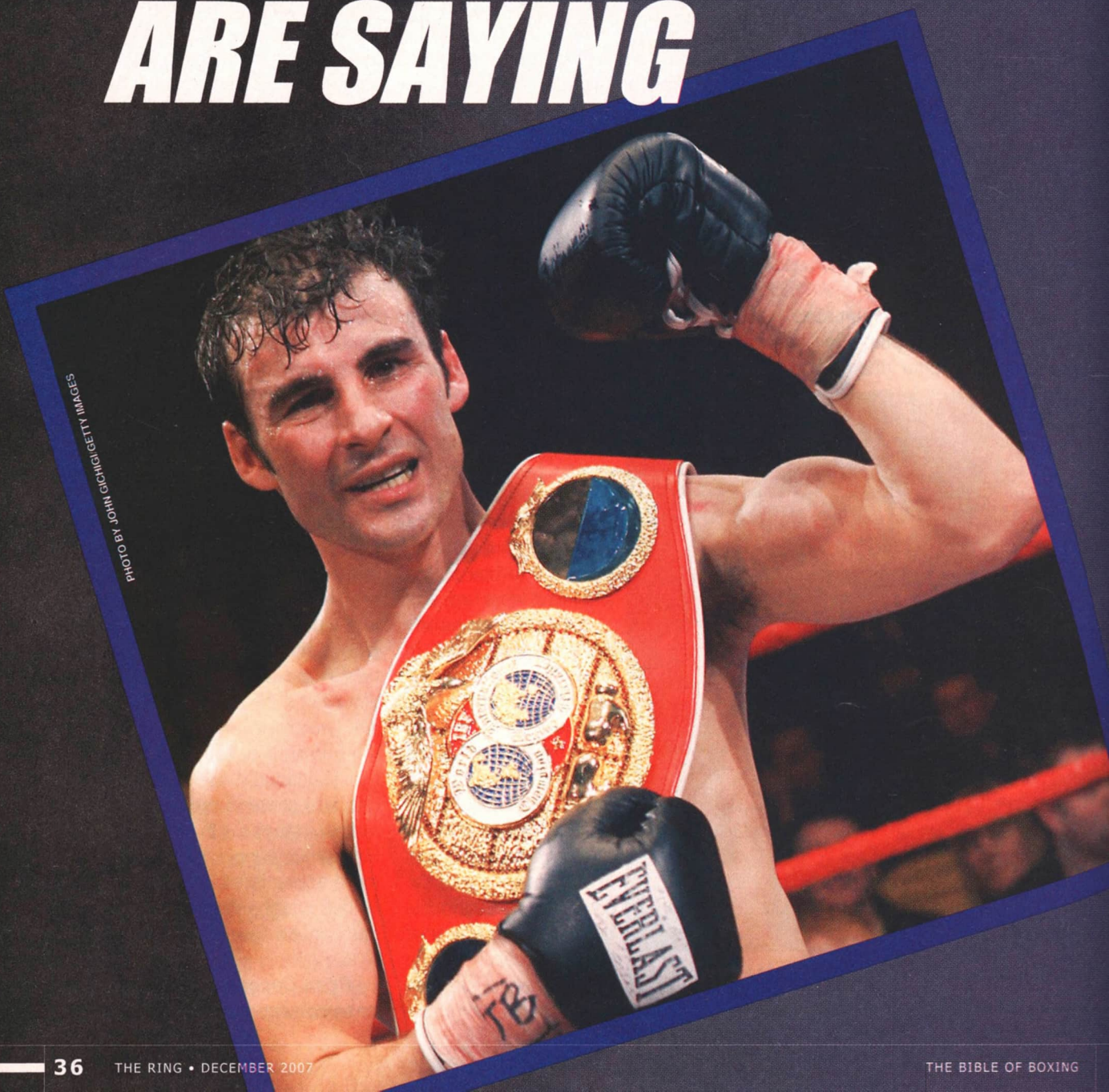


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY TORSTEN BLACKWOODS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

So you thought the biggest fight of the new millennium took place when Floyd Mayweather decisioned Oscar De La Hoya in May, huh? Think again. Mayweather and De La Hoya had the United States enthralled, but boxing is an international sport. Joe Calzaghe and Mikkel Kessler will have the whole continent of Europe watching when they meet at Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales, on November 13.

This mega showdown will be Europe's Mayweather-De La Hoya, with a good chance of being a more fan-friendly fight. It has everything a megafight requires: Calzaghe is THE RING*'s undefeated world super middleweight champion, taking on the undefeated number-one contender in Kessler.*

Still, as in all good matches, questions remain: Is this the fight in which the 35-year-old Calzaghe suddenly shows his age against his 28-year-old challenger? Does Kessler have the firepower to jolt Calzaghe? Will Calzaghe's hands hold up? Will Kessler be able to negate the heavy pro-Calzaghe crowd in the champion's backyard?

THE RING polled 20 experts, from Europe and North America, for their opinions and predictions.

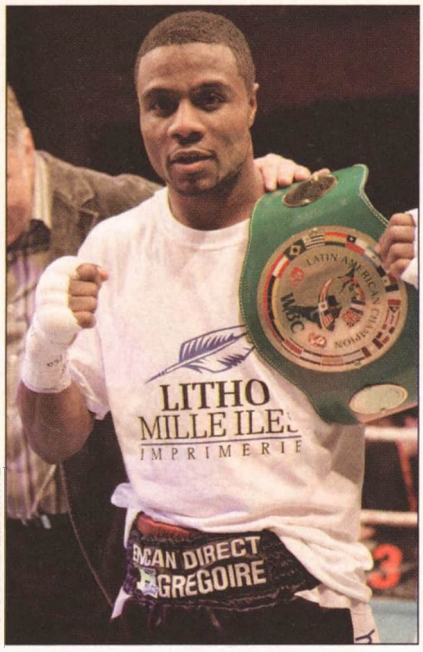


PHOTO BY HERBIE WHYNE

Undefeated Canadian super middleweight Jean Pascal believes Calzaghe will be too smart for Kessler.

Glyn Leach (British *Boxing Monthly* editor): "Can Mikkel Kessler provide the challenge to Joe Calzaghe's super middleweight supremacy that Jeff Lacy promised but failed to deliver? I think he might because the Dane is far more experienced than the American and has a confidence built on hard work and results rather than blowouts and hyperbole. Kessler has fought and won on foreign soil, which means a lot in relation to facing Calzaghe in front of potentially the largest indoor crowd in boxing history. The timing is right for Calzaghe to win by points after what I expect to be by far the hardest fight of his career."

Lou DiBella (promoter of middleweight champion Jermain Taylor): "My heart is with Calzaghe. I think he's one of the great champions of his generation. He has heart, desire, and skill. But Kessler is a beast who may be too young, too strong, and too hungry for Calzaghe at this stage of his career. I'll pick Kessler by late stoppage or decision. But I'll be rooting for Calzaghe."

Gavin Evans (British freelance writer): "Kessler is continental Europe's finest—a 6'1" boxer-puncher with fluid movement, heavy jab, and refined skills. He's an excellent combination puncher, knows how to cut off the ring, and owns a firm chin; he's never been down. Although, like Calzaghe, he's been plagued by hand and back trouble. At 28, he's reached his peak. He's reasonably quick and busy, but still lacks the speed and work rate of the 35-year-old Welshman. An upset wouldn't surprise me, but I'll tentatively go with the bookies: Calzaghe on points."

Dan Birmingham (Jeff Lacy's trainer): "I can't count Calzaghe out against anyone. Calzaghe is a master of distance and timing, like Roy Jones in his prime. Joe also seems better against the better fighters. Kessler looked very good his last time out, against Librado Andrade, though I like Joe's experience. Kessler looks like one tough nut, but I'll say Calzaghe wins by decision."

Steve Farhood (*ShoBox* commentator): "Calzaghe and Kessler are so clearly the best fighters in their division that a matchup comes as a natural. Because Calzaghe is so established, this fight means much more to Kessler. Despite a couple of appearances on American television, he's still relatively unknown. Both fighters are fast and solid boxers. But I can't help but think that Kessler will be hungrier. This will be his defining fight, Kessler's Lacy fight. I like Kessler because he's technically sound enough to overcome Calzaghe's advantage in speed. Kessler on points."

Kevin Mitchell (*The Observer* boxing correspondent): "This promises to be each man's toughest fight—by some way. Both have ring smarts, out and out boxing ability, and toughness. Kessler is unknown to many only because of his lack of wide exposure in the U.K. and the U.S., but Calzaghe knows just how good he is. And that's inspiration enough for any proud fighter. I favor the Welshman ever so slightly because he has more in reserve. Calzaghe on points."

Jean Pascal (Canadian super middleweight): "I'll pick Calzaghe. If you remember Joe's fight against Jeff Lacy, everyone was saying Joe was too old and Lacy was too strong. Everyone I know in boxing thinks Kessler is going to kick Joe's ass. If we see the same Joe Calzaghe that we saw against Jeff Lacy, Joe will win by decision. But this fight will be much closer than the Calzaghe-Lacy fight. If there is a knockout, it will come from Kessler. But Joe is too smart to let that happen."

Allan Green (super middleweight contender): "Kessler has yet to prove himself against a quality fighter. Librado Andrade is a good fighter, but nothing close to Calzaghe. Joe has deceptive hand speed. He's a pesky puncher, moves his body, and frustrates you. Calzaghe will outsmart Kessler and win by decision."

Steve Bunce (BBC national boxing commentator): "Before the fight with Jeff Lacy, I said on my BBC radio show that Joe would win every round because of his brain. It will be similar with Kessler, but it will be closer. Kessler has the boxing brain that Lacy dreams of. I see it being tight. I see Joe under pressure, but I see Joe knowing enough. People forget how many times in fights he has adjusted his tactics. Joe is older and slower now, but still too sweet for Mike Marley's Danish beauty. Calzaghe on points."

John David Jackson (former WBA middleweight titleholder and current trainer of Allan Green): "Kessler is definitely a dangerous fighter, but Calzaghe has proven himself and he's withstood the test of time. Calzaghe certainly has a lot more to lose. They're talking about Calzaghe and Bernard Hopkins next year, and Calzaghe wouldn't want to ruin that chance. Joe is more polished and more experienced. I'll give him the edge by decision. Kessler is strong and durable. Joe slaps a lot, so I'll say he has more of a chance of winning by decision than anything."

Freddie Burcombe (*News Of The World* boxing writer): "Joe Calzaghe toughs it out because he has too much pride, stamina, big-night nerves, and invaluable home support. Kessler has to come through a wall of noise and a 35-year-old Welshman who raises his game when the chips are down. But Calzaghe is not viewing this as his retirement pot contest; he wants more of the sort of

money this fight is providing—and he likes the glory that goes with the territory."

Peter Manfredo (*The Contender* Season I finalist and a Calzaghe victim): "It's in Wales, so obviously Joe will have the advantage, if it goes to a decision. Joe is old now and he has had bad hand problems. But I admit Joe's very fast. He's hard to get to, though, in my opinion, I don't think he has the power to hurt anyone with one punch. It's kind of hard to say who will win this fight. But I have to go with Calzaghe by decision—unless the ref stops it prematurely!"

Al Bernstein (Showtime's *Championship Boxing* color analyst): "It's a fight that needed to be made. We forget that we get jingoistic in the United States, but that fight is extremely important in Europe, and it should be important to us here in the U.S. We know Kessler is in his prime or heading into, and the only thing you worry about Calzaghe is that his hands can go at any time. Joe still has one or two great performances in him. Calzaghe has a way of giving people more than they think they're going to get from him. I reluctantly go with Calzaghe by decision. He just knows how to win."

Per Ake Persson (British *Boxing News* Hamburg, Germany-based correspondent and contributor to the knock-out.dk website): "Both are genuine world-class performers who can handle superstar status and the pressure of a big fight. I think Kessler will win this fight. His longer reach and excellent timing, along with Calzaghe's aggressive style, is likely to mean that Mikkel will find the range for his jab. Once that happens, I would say he's almost unbeatable. The jab will create openings for his right hand and his combinations. Kessler to win by TKO somewhere after six rounds or by points in a Fight of the Year candidate."

Don McRae (*The Guardian* boxing writer and author of *Dark Trade: Lost In Boxing*): "In an absorbing battle, which will test both fighters, Calzaghe digs deeps to prevail over 12 tightly contested rounds. A sense of time closing in on the unbeaten Welshman might be evident, but, in front of his passionate home crowd, Calzaghe does just enough after a couple of mid-round scares. Kessler proves himself superior to most boxers Calzaghe has previously faced—but the Dane is a good fighter, rather than a great one. An aging Calzaghe is still the superior technician, but, with his career winding down, he will be hoping desperately for a big night out in America rather than a rematch against such a solid European opponent."

Lucian Bute (super middleweight contender): "I think it will be a hard fight, but Kessler will win. I think he can hurt Calzaghe late. Kessler's jab is a weapon that can't be ignored. Kessler likes to set up with the jab. Kessler faced Markus Beyer and he destroyed him, but I don't believe Kessler can destroy Calzaghe that way. Kessler gets fighters out of their comfort zone by throwing punches at every angle."

Carl Froch (British super middleweight champion): "It's no way a one-sided fight either way. A few years ago, Calzaghe outpoints Kessler easily. I see this being more of a tactical fight. Calzaghe has fast hands and a good work rate. That will cause Kessler some problems. Kessler can box and move and he can punch a little bit. Calzaghe is no spring chicken anymore. In my opinion, it is a 50-50 fight. It wouldn't be a surprise if Kessler won the fight, but if I had to make a pick, I'd have to say Calzaghe on points."

Graham Maclean (Germany-based contributor for *Boxing Monthly* and *The Guardian*): "A lot depends on which version of Joe Calzaghe appears in Cardiff. If it's the same Calzaghe that defeated Jeff Lacy, then you have to fancy him against any super middleweight in the world. Anything less than that and he will have his work cut out. Kessler is a class act and his stoppage win over Markus Beyer demonstrated that he is capable of beating a quality southpaw. Even so, I suspect that the Welshman will pull away in the second half of the fight and grind out a late stoppage."

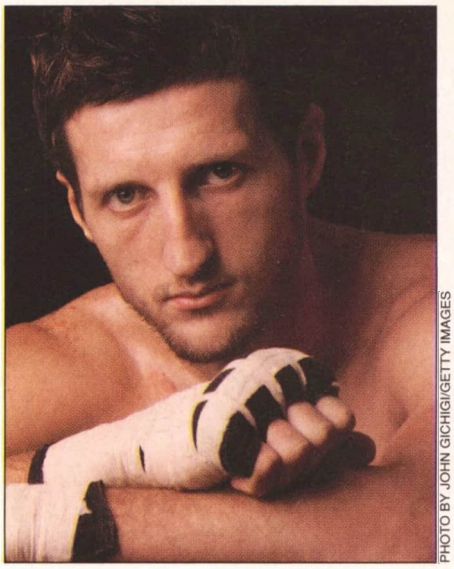


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

British super middleweight contender Carl Froch thinks the fight is a tossup, but when pressed, gives Calzaghe the edge.

Stephane Larouche (Lucian Bute's trainer): "It's probably a more interesting fight than some people may think. Kessler is approaching the peak moment of his career. He's young, he's very strong, and he has a really good sense of distance and balance. On the other hand, Joe Calzaghe is 35 years old. With the fight taking place on Calzaghe's turf, the pressure will be on Kessler. It will be a rough fight with quality exchanges. Calzaghe will come out with a decision."

Michael Enggaard Hansen (Editor of Denmark's *Jyllands-Posten*): "Apart from Jeff Lacy, who never knew how to throw a straight punch, Joe Calzaghe has fought soft opposition in his later reign. I think Calzaghe will find it hard to stamp his authority on Kessler. The Dane might not be quite as fast as him, but he's probably stronger and at least equally gifted. Calzaghe lifts his game in bigger fights, but I think Kessler is hungry and consistent fighting at the highest level the last few years. Almost without losing a round he has proven himself against elite opponents, even traveling to beat Anthony Mundine in Australia. I think Kessler wins a close decisionm scoring a flash knockdown in the first half of the fight when Calzaghe comes rushing in."

Final Tally: Calzaghe 15; Kessler 5.■

The Welterweight Warriors' Call To Arms

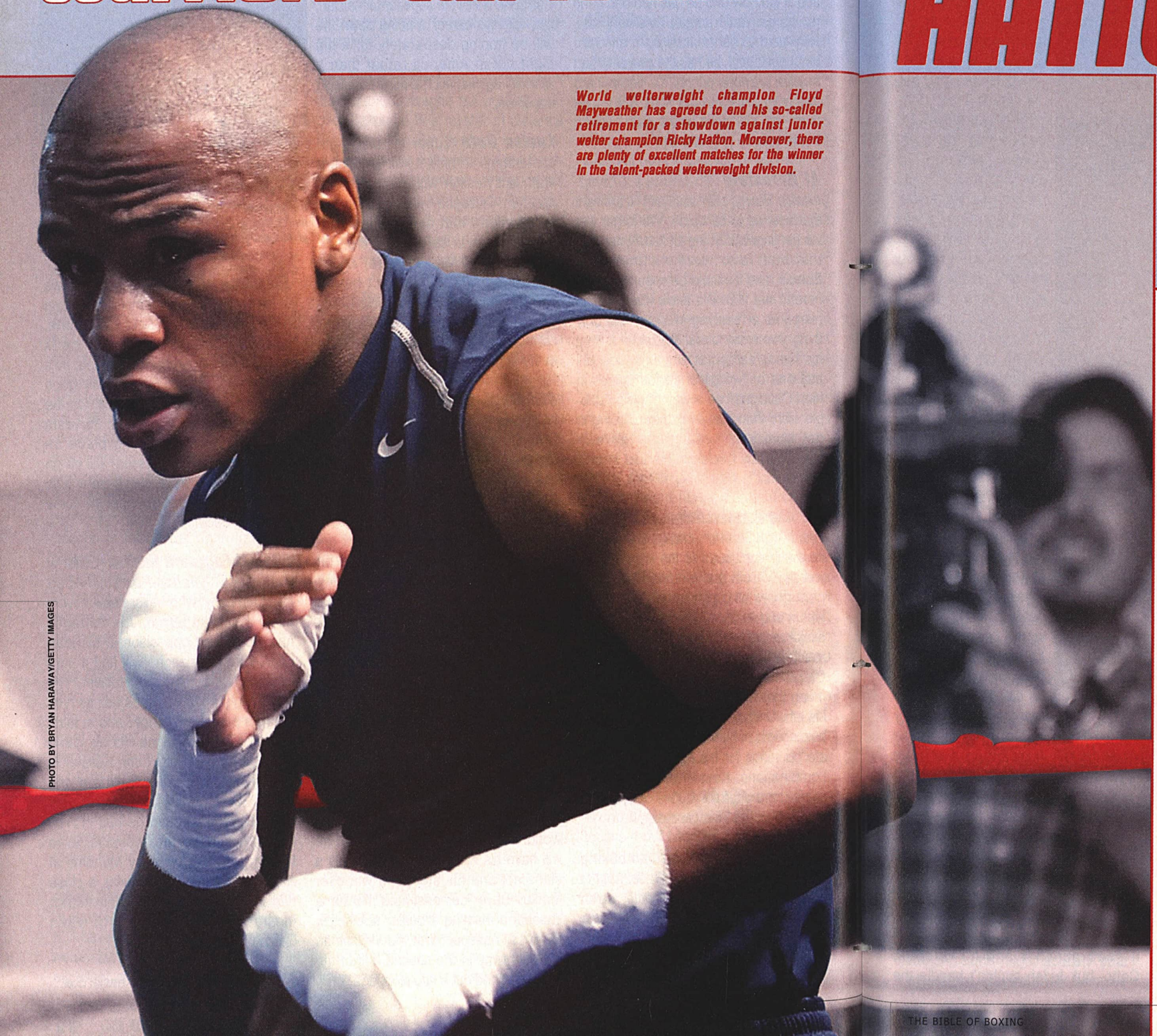


PHOTO BY BRYAN HARAWAY/GETTY IMAGES

World welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather has agreed to end his so-called retirement for a showdown against junior welter champion Ricky Hatton. Moreover, there are plenty of excellent matches for the winner in the talent-packed welterweight division.

MAYWEATHER-HATTON & COTTO-MOSLEY ARE JUST THE START!

By Don Stradley

When Floyd Mayweather said he was retiring from boxing to entertain plans for a reality TV show, we almost believed him. His wacky family would've made a heck of a subject. The only better idea would be for the Mayweathers to do a remake of *Sanford And Son*, with Floyd Sr. as Fred Sanford, Floyd Jr. as Lamont, and Uncle Roger as Grady. But since Mayweather has agreed to meet Ricky Hatton, we can put a stop all of that TV talk for now. That's just as well. The welterweight division is juicier than it has been in years, so we'd rather see Floyd come back to the ring and defend the welterweight championship than mug for television cameras.

Not since the days of young Oscar De La Hoya, old Pernell Whitaker, Felix Trinidad, and Ike Quartey has the 147-pound class been so piping hot, with such a variety of good bouts on the horizon. If Floyd gets past Hatton, he'll have a melting pot of strong challengers to pick from.

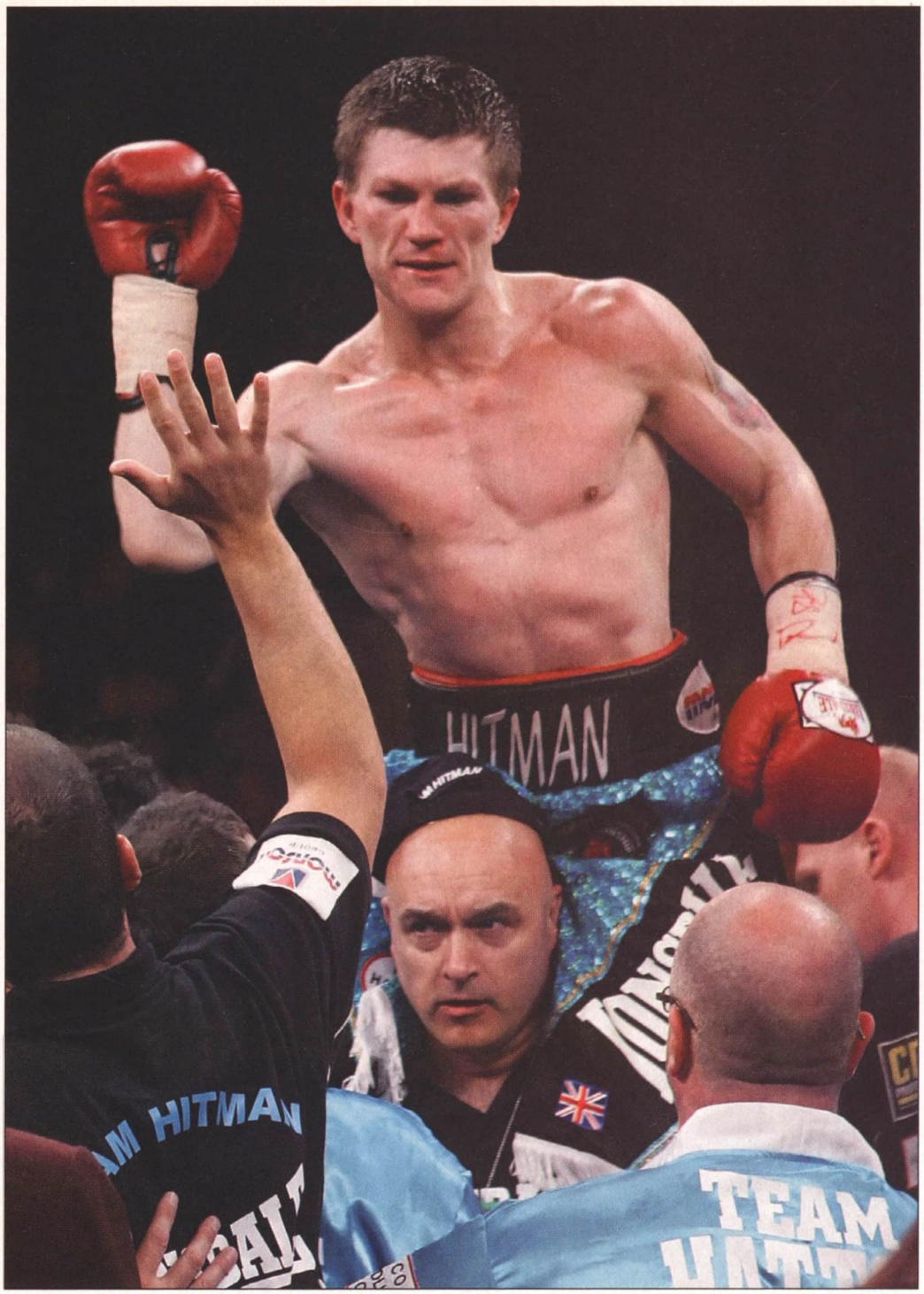


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton's disparaging comments about Mayweather have had the desired effect of luring "Pretty Boy" into the ring with the Manchester "Hitman." Both are undefeated, but few outside of Hatton's faithful British fans believe he can get the better of the super fast and extremely slippery Mayweather.

Granted, Mayweather has never been concerned about dominating one particular weight class, but if he wants to be an all-time great, he should consider taking on some of the young lions at 147. Or if Hatton should win, he'll be busy for years with this bunch. On the other hand, if Floyd should "retire" again, or if Hatton decides he can't punch his weight at 147, this crew will have to fight each other. And that's not a bad deal, either.

The news that Shane Mosley is penciled in for a bout with Miguel Cotto is the best news we've heard in a while. Mosley, 44-4 (38), has seemed like the odd man out for months, but Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer told THE RING, "Shane, at this point in his career, deserves the biggest and best fights. He will ultimately again be, pound-for-pound, the best fighter in the world. There is no question that in this particular weight class Shane is the name and the man to beat."

Mosley's only drawback is that he occasionally shows up empty-handed. Think back to his first losses to Vernon Forrest and Winky Wright. He seemed utterly empty not only physically, but mentally. You could almost hear him thinking during the fights, *What do I do now?* Fortunately, this has only happened a few times in his career and he fought both Forrest and Wright closer in rematches. Mosley's recent wins over Vargas and Luis Collazo showed that he still has the mechanics of a first-class fighter, even if he's a shade past his peak. A win over Cotto would certainly establish Mosley as being back on top. Whether he can do it or not is a real question.

Cotto has gone from being a robotic contender to a top-tier boxing attraction, drawing Puerto Rican fans in great numbers. His recent win over Zab Judah showed what's good and bad about him: Hitting Cotto is easier than hitting a billboard with a snowball, but he's relentless. Hit him once, and he'll nail you twice in return. Judah is a good puncher and he wobbled Cotto, but Judah couldn't handle the

Williams Edges Margarito

Antonio Margarito remained cool throughout his 12-round decision loss to Paul Williams. It couldn't have been easy, for Williams was raining punches down at him from what seemed an impossible height, as well as from impossible angles. Williams' blows seemed to come from all four corners of the Home Depot Center in Carson City, California. Still, Margarito smirked, as if he was certain his strength and experience would pay off. After all, he was the supposed to be the most avoided fighter in the welterweight division, wasn't he?

Williams, 145, Aiken, South Carolina, got off to a remarkable start, dominating the first few rounds with impressive ring generalship and a high volume of punches. Margarito, 145, Tijuana, Mexico, seemed baffled, but by the middle rounds he was closing the distance and landing hard shots to Williams' body. Margarito was especially good during the torrid seventh and eighth rounds, but during the ninth, Williams bravely traded blows with Margarito, temporarily stopping his foe's forward momentum.

Margarito wasn't done. After wobbling Williams with a couple of right-hand bombs at the end of the 10th, Margarito stormed through the 11th, clipping Williams with short rights to the jaw and landing bodypunches that nearly bent the youngster in half. By the end of the round, Williams' left eyebrow had been split open. He'd never been past the 10th round in his career and he was feeling it. Showing poise and a desire to win, though, Williams jogged out for the 12th, dominated Margarito on the inside, and won the round.

All three judges scored the bout for Williams. David Mendoza and Marty Sammon both scored it 115-113, as did The Ring, while Tom Miller saw it as 116-112.

"The fight went as I expected, even though it was not an easy fight," said Williams, 33-0 (24). "Margarito is a tough dude. I definitely got stunned by his punches. The plan was to put early rounds in the bank, which I did. I knew Margarito is a slow starter.

"I never felt his punches," said an angry Margarito. "He never hurt me. He didn't win the fight. He threw more punches, but I landed the harder punches. After the ninth round, I felt as though I was ahead on the scorecards. Everyone in the arena knows that I won the fight."

(7-14-0)

—D.S.

accumulation of punches coming back at him. If Cotto were a bull in a bullring, he'd be the one with a half dozen *bandeirilhas* in his back, still trying to gore the matador.

The upcoming bout with Mosley will be his first real megafight, but Cotto is such a brick house that he won't be bothered by the hoopla. Cotto, 30-0 (25), is a smarter-than-average pressure fighter, has decent power in both hands, and can wear down an opponent with crippling bodyshots. He'd have problems with the hard punchers in the class, but against guys who can't hurt him, he'll walk right in and bang away with good results.

Cotto is one of those fighters who really brings out the old saw about styles making fights. For instance, Cotto might actually beat a stylist like Mayweather, because

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Another exceptional welterweight match coming up is between three-division former titleholder Sugar Shane Mosley (right) and undefeated Miguel Cotto (above). The winner of that match would be the perfect foe for the Mayweather-Hatton winner.

PHOTO BY CHAD LUNDQUIST

The advantage of Paul Williams' height and reach is obvious as he lands a right hand against Sharmba Mitchell en route to a fourth-round knockout in August 2006. The 6'1" southpaw has an 82-inch reach and is undefeated in 33 professional bouts.

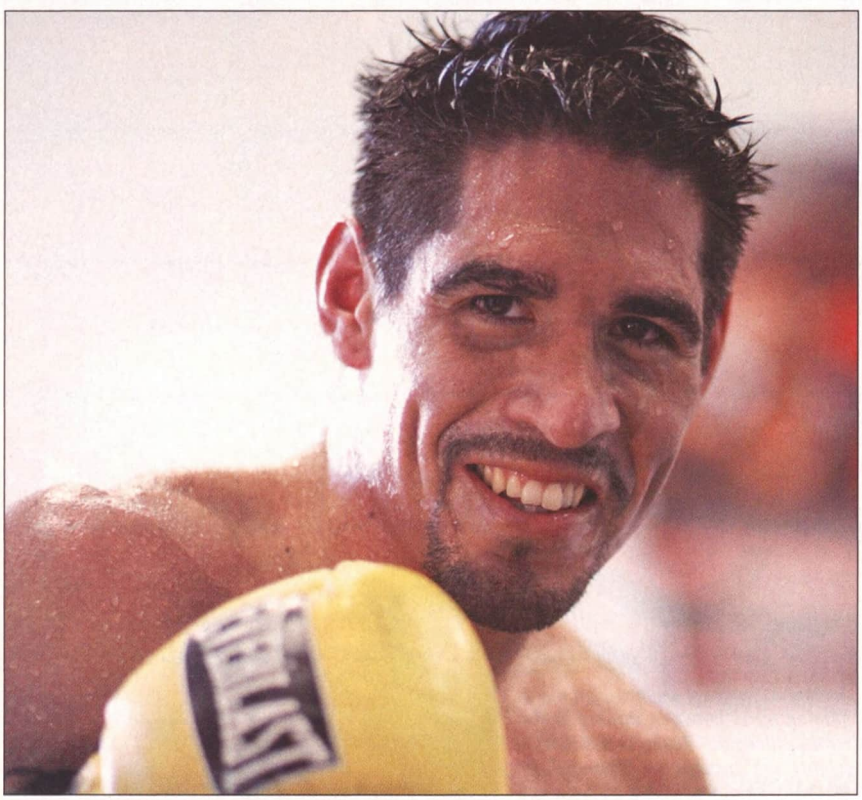


PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Despite his recent close decision loss to Williams, Antonio Margarito remains a viable contender and a very tough assignment for any 147-pounder in the world.

he'd ignore Mayweather's punches and crowd him, pummel him, and get his work done. He could succeed at what De La Hoya tried to do against Mayweather, because De La Hoya isn't as comfortable in that sort of fight. Against Mayweather, the split decision might go the other way and favor Cotto. However, Cotto could have problems with someone like Antonio Margarito, who would gladly trade punches with him, and might prove stronger. Kermit Cintron might knock Cotto out the first time he hits him. So the 36-year-old Mosley is really a good choice for Cotto, in that Mosley is a sharp but not devastating puncher, and at Mosley's age, Cotto's strength and youth might overwhelm him. Still, Bob Arum is certainly taking a calculated risk putting his top ticket-seller in with somebody of Mosley's caliber.

The winner of Cotto-Mosley would be an obvious choice for the winner of Mayweather-Hatton. We could see an all-out bash between Hatton and Cotto, Mayweather and Mosley, or Mayweather and Cotto. Keep running those pairs through your brain and try not to blow a fuse. Meanwhile, the rest of the welterweights seem pretty fierce.

Some think that Margarito's loss to Paul Williams means he'll no longer be "the most avoided" fighter in boxing. But the loss to Williams didn't diminish his standing too much. The fight was close, and since Margarito had Williams hurt near the end, he came out looking like a strong, dangerous fighter. He also took Williams' best shots without blinking. Either Williams is just a glorified slapper or Margarito has some steel in his head.

Margarito is still a fighter to avoid because he's just that tough. His problem is that he's managed to build a reputation without building a name. A rematch with Williams or perhaps Cintron are his two best bets right now. And he has to win those, otherwise he'll be banished to HBO limbo.

As for Margarito's conqueror, Williams is still a bit of a glass elephant. His appearance is absolutely majestic and he piles up astronomi-

Cintron Dispatches Matthysse

In the other half of HBO's welterweight show emanating from opposite coasts, Kermit Cintron, 146, Reading, Pennsylvania, the latest of Emanuel Steward's reclamation projects, scored an impressive second-round knockout of Walter Matthysse at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall, on the undercard of the Alfonso Gomez-Arturo Gatti bout. What was supposed to be a shootout be-tween two of the division's biggest hitters turned out to be an easy win for Cintron, who is beginning to show the promise we thought he had. Under Steward's mentoring, Cintron has become a tighter, sharper, more effective fighter.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Ref Earl Morton raises Cintron's arm after quick kayo of Mathysse

Right from the start, Cintron had the correct range against Argentina's Matthysse, 147, boxing smartly and landing hard uppercuts. He knocked Matthysse down with a right cross at the end of the first, and then again early in the second. Matthysse rose on unsteady legs, but Cintron knocked him nearly cold with a pinpoint left hook to the chin and a shocking right to the side of the head. Referee Earl Morton stopped the bout at the 0:29 mark of the second. Matthysse stayed on the canvas for nearly a minute before he was able to sit upright. Cintron, the IBF titleholder, now stands at 28-1 (26), while Matthysse falls to 26-2 (25).

"I'm a big puncher, but Emanuel has me boxing," Cintron said. "I have a lot to learn, but I'm gonna get there."

After the bout, Cintron crowed that this knockout erased his 2005 loss to Margarito. Actually, it doesn't. The only way for Cintron to erase that loss is to fight Margarito again. At one time it seemed Cintron was too emotional to overcome Margarito, but now that he has matured a bit, a rematch might be tasty.

As for Matthysse, he's lost his two biggest fights, and although he's a minor star in Argentina, his record in American rings is 1-2, with both losses coming by knockouts. Who would've thought Carlos Baldomir and Jorge Barrios were such tough acts to follow?

(7-14-07)

—D.S.

cal punch counts, but we worry that Williams could use his skills to peck out a lot of stinkers. Still, Williams is young at 25, so maybe he'll be as good as he looks someday. His Pterodactyl wingspan will make him a nightmare for anybody, even Mayweather. Sometimes height and reach can negate speed and defense. Williams isn't Sandy Saddler yet, but he's tall enough and busy enough to give Mayweather some trouble. But Williams is in the same category as Margarito. He's talented, but his name isn't as big as he is. He and Margarito may be destined to meet again, because no one else wants these two. And as Mayweather is gunning for Hatton, that means "Pretty Boy" is thinking smaller, not bigger. Of course, if Williams really wants to establish himself as the best of the new blood, he could fight Cintron.

Cintron is the division's sweetest hitter, but the best thing that ever happened to him was his loss to Margarito. It opened the door for Emanuel Steward to bring Cintron to the Kronk Gym and retool him. But if Cintron gets a big money fight with one of the other top welterweights, it will be because he's still perceived as the vulnerable kid who lost to Margarito. No one would fight Cintron if he was undefeated. They'd hide from him. But since Margarito made him look like a college freshman on hazing night, an experienced pro may think there's a good chance to beat him.

Cintron's power is such that he'd

be dangerous for anyone in the division. Even the elite of the group might just crumble at Cintron's feet. When Steward was managing Vivian Harris, he seriously thought Harris' height and power would beat the crafty Mayweather. Harris turned out to be a disappointment, but Cintron is even stronger and more formidable. With Steward guiding him, the 27-year-old Cintron could go all the way in this division, and yes, even against Mayweather. Sometimes pure power has its way. True, Mayweather could also frustrate Cintron to the point of tears, but it's more fun to imagine Cintron blasting opponents into small pieces.

While the Mayweather-Hatton-Cotto-Mosley group fights it out, Cintron can stay busy and continue to make his name more attractive, perhaps by taking on Margarito in a rematch or maybe Williams. If Cintron accomplishes this, the class' top players won't have any excuses to not fight him. At press time he was scheduled to face Jess Feliciano in September on the undercard of the Vargas-Ricardo Mayorga pay-per-view show.

Zab Judah, 34-5 (25), hasn't won a fight in two years, but he showed he still has something left when he went toe-to-toe with Cotto last June. He may not be looking at a major payday soon, but if Williams or Cintron wanted a cool-looking name on their resume, they could do a lot worse than Judah. The cocky Brooklyn native may not want to be in the role of opponent, but he needs to play ball with whoever makes an offer. Judah has a fight scheduled with journeyman Edwin Vasquez, and providing he looks good, the phone will be ringing.

Collazo hasn't lived up to the promise he showed when he defeated Jose Antonio Rivera in an exciting fight in 2005. Since then, he lost a close one to Hatton and was then taken to school by Mosley. At press time, he was penciled in to fight aging trialhorse Sharmba Mitchell. If Collazo, 27-3-1 (13), wins convincingly, HBO might recycle him as an opponent for Williams, Margarito, or Cintron. If Collazo wants to force the issue, he might consider Josh Clottey, or even Ike Quartey, who recently said a return to 147 was in his future.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Kermit Cintron delivers a crushing right hand to Walter Matthysse head en route to a second-round knockout. Cintron, who has rebounded well from his knockout loss to Margarito, is considered the hardest puncher among today's welterweights.

De La Hoya, 38-5 (30), hasn't seen 147 pounds since March 2001, when he fought Arturo Gatti, but he has vocalized a desire to join his old weight class. Assuming he's serious, he'd certainly add another dimension to the group. De La Hoya has established a pattern in his career of following a difficult opponent with a fighter who is easier for him. Mosley was followed by Gatti, Vargas was followed by Yory Boy Campas, and Bernard Hopkins was followed by Mayorga. He might follow his loss to Mayweather by facing a brawler, because Oscar can handle brawlers. He's mentioned Hatton and Cotto, but since both of them are busy, he'll probably take some time off to see what happens. If Cotto beats Mosley, you can bet on seeing De La Hoya-Cotto in 2008. Or if, by some crazy chance, Hatton beats Mayweather, De La Hoya would relish fighting Hatton. If Oscar beats the man who beat Floyd, then he's one up on Mayweather. That would be a great note to retire on. Also, we can't discount the somewhat inevitable De La Hoya-Mayweather II.

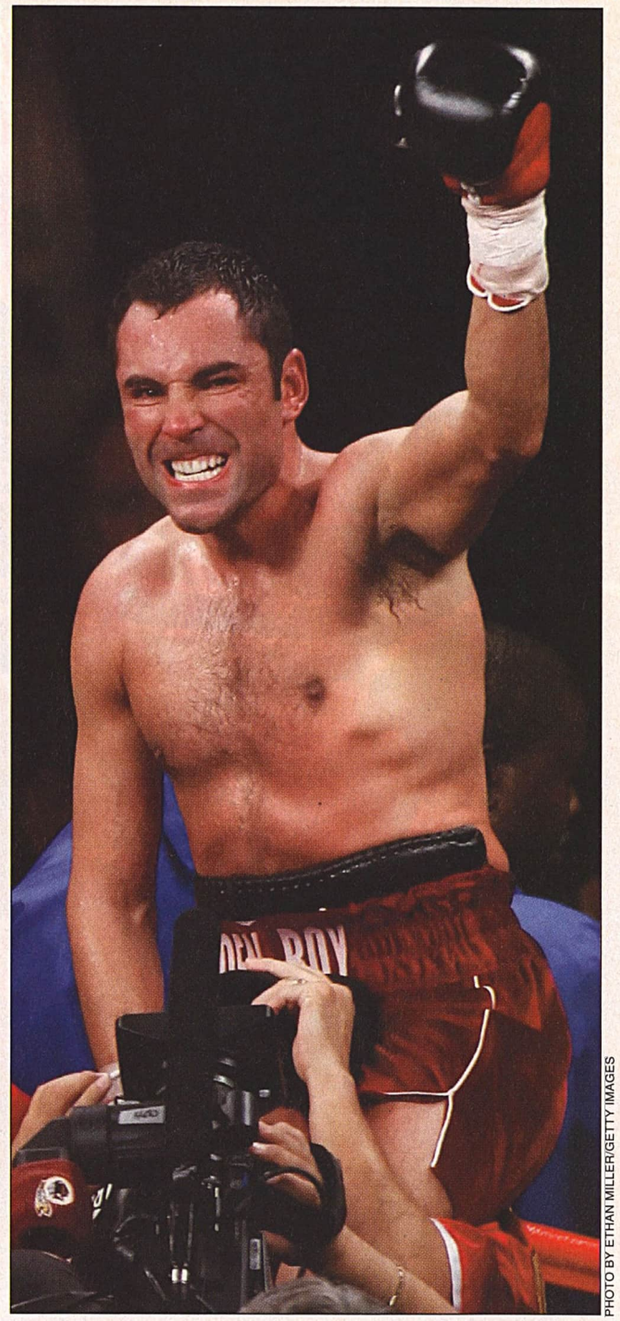


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Oscar De La Hoya remains the biggest attraction in the sport, which is good news for all of the top welterweight contenders because "The Golden Boy" has said he will drop back down to 147 pounds for his next fight.

As for the youngsters in the division, the only one other than Cotto who might attract De La Hoya's eye would be Cintron. With a couple more highlight reel knockouts, Cintron will establish himself as the big bad kayo monster of the division. De La Hoya always loves a challenge. He can hype this one by saying, "Gosh, I've never fought such a devastating puncher before. Mayweather's little punches were nothing. This young fighter could kill me!" Thus, the turnstiles will spin on fight night.

In the meantime, De La Hoya will do what the rest of us will do—he'll watch a hot welterweight division slug it out. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

AN EXTRA DOSE OF REALITY

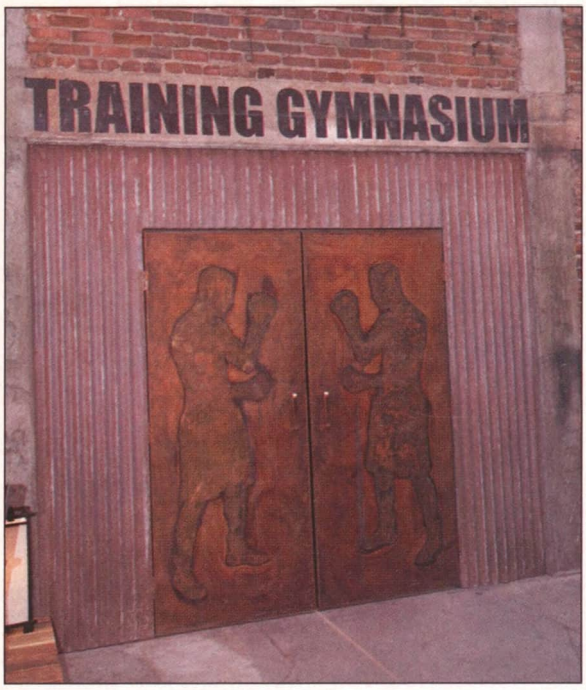
The Ring Takes You Behind The Scenes Of *The Contender*

By Ivan Goldman

PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Jan Sanders and I, your intrepid Ring photo-scribe team, were recently welcomed onto the super-secret set of *The Contender*, where everyone was really nice to us if you exclude the part where we had to sign the document about the fight they were taping that night. In it, we agreed that if we divulged the winner ahead of time, or in fact anything about that fight at all, we would not lift a finger in resistance as the vengeful producers and their legal attack dogs dragged us into court, stripped us of homes, possessions, and pets and left us battered, dazed, and naked in the dumpster behind the courthouse.

If everything went well, the show already aired on ESPN (ESPN2 will show an uncut version of the fights each week) before this article appeared. But nobody wanted to take the chance that someone down the line from the editorial and production end would spill the beans and ruin the surprise for viewers. Why upset a winning formula? When Grady Brewer decisioned Steve Forbes in its second-season finale last year, the bout was viewed by an estimated 2.3 million people, making it the highest-rated boxing telecast on ESPN in nine years.



The Contender ***set is located in the warehouse district on the edges of downtown Los Angeles***

So all I'm going to say about the details of the episode I'm not supposed to say anything at all about was that no animals were harmed in its making. I'd like to add that the lawyers examining this article for the show are absolute saints and all those jokes about scheming, thieving attorneys are just so unfair.

The Contender tapes its fights before a closed audience of perhaps 250 people who all knew somebody or at least knew somebody who knew somebody who could get them the prize of a seat, creating a strange intersection of cultures where the Hollywood industry bisects with the fight world. And though the TV biz is not famous for its veracity, everything about the fights themselves is of course genuine and in fact supervised by the California commission.

Jan and I were given freedom to roam around behind the scenes, to visit the fighters in their dormitory and ask them anything we felt like, which few people are allowed to do because the 16 fighters all agreed to spend three weeks in seclusion on the set. When they get tired of being shut inside, they can wander into a small, enclosed area in the open air.

"It's like a prison, but we get to

Season Three Contestants

The 16 super middleweight boxers vying for this year's title of *The Contender* included:

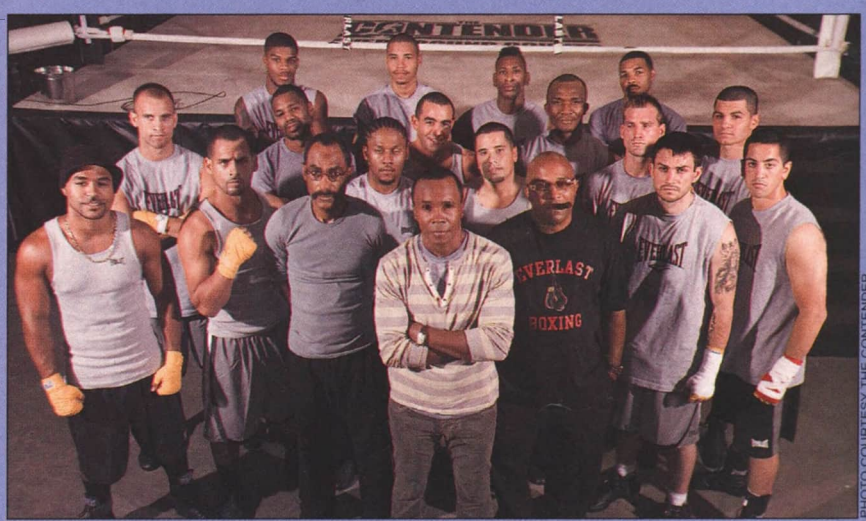


PHOTO COURTESY THE CONTENDER

The 2007 cast of **The Contender**

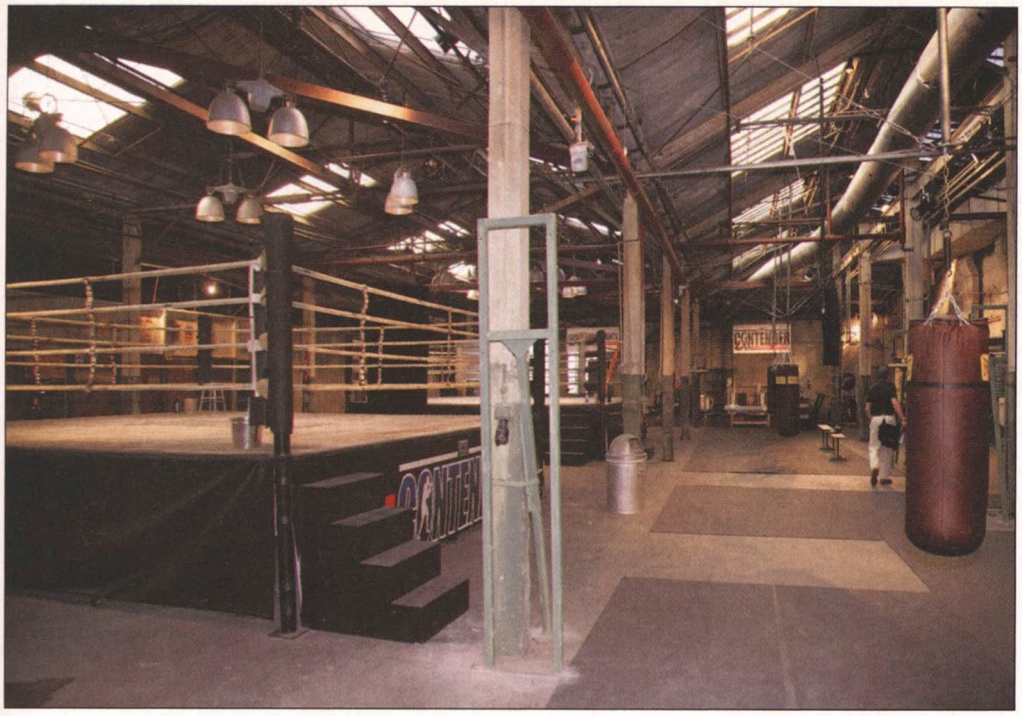
MAX ALEXANDER
Hometown: Camden, New Jersey
Pro Record: 14-0-1 (2) with 1 no-contest
Age: 26
Fast Fact: Earned a degree in criminal justice at Montclair State University

DAVID BANKS
Hometown: Portland, Oregon
Pro Record: 14-2-1 (2)
Age: 24
Fast Fact: First to defeat Alvin Ayala and Paul Clavette

SAKIO BIKA
Hometown: Sydney, Australia
Pro Record: 22-3-2 (14)
Age: 28
Fast fact: Gave world champ Joe Calzaghe his toughest defense

HENRY BUCHANAN
Hometown: Capitol Heights, Maryland
Pro Record: 14-1 (11)
Age: 28
Fast Fact: Lone loss was to 22-0 Jean Paul Mendy

LA FARRELL BUNTING
Hometown: Las Vegas, Nevada
Pro Record: 16-3-1 (16)
Age: 27
Fast Fact: Went 12 rounds with undefeated Jean Pascal



Goldman is almost lost in the cavernous **Contender** *gym*

beat people up," said David Banks, a quick wit out of Portland, Oregon.

This year, the fighters were super middleweights and the show presented more of an international flavor with one from Cameroon, one from Australia, and another from the U.K. Also, this year the purse money was upped to a cool million, ratcheting up the intensity of the rivalry.

"I'd fight them all at once for a million dollars," said Paul Smith. "Any of us would."

But even though any of them could wind up fighting a pal, Miguel Hernandez said, "We're all family men, we could all do a lot with that money, but we respect each other. If we don't win, we'll end up with friendships."

Smith didn't see it exactly the same way. "We're not getting too close," he said. "We're all professionals. We understand what's at stake." These are all personable guys. If they weren't, they wouldn't have been chosen for

JAIDON CODRINGTON
Hometown: Queens, New York
Pro Record: 16-1 (12)
Age: 23
Fast Fact: Sugar Ray Leonard is one of his idols

MIGUEL HERNANDEZ
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Pro Record: 20-5 (10)
Age: 32
Fast Fact: Didn't turn pro until 27

WAYNE JOHNSEN
Hometown: Lyndhurst, New Jersey
Pro record: 16-1 (9)
Age: 29
Fast Fact: College football player who switched to boxing because of knee injury

DONNY McCRARY
Hometown: St. Joseph, Missouri
Pro Record: 23-5-2 (13)
Age: 24
Fast Fact: Won six of last seven bouts going into *The Contender*

LES RALSTON
Hometown: Buffalo, New York
Pro Record: 16-2 (9)
Age: 25
Fast fact: Son of '60s light heavyweight contender Jimmy Ralston

DANNY SANTIAGO
Hometown: Ocala, Florida
Pro Record: 29-3-1 (19)
Age: 34
Fast Fact: Oldest of the group

PAUL SMITH
Hometown: Liverpool, England
Pro Record: 20-0 (12)
Age: 24
Fast Fact: Stopped first-season participant Jonathan Reid in last pre-*Contender* bout

SAM SOLIMAN
Hometown: Melbourne, Australia
Pro Record: 33-9 (13)
Age: 33
Fast fact: Has the most pro bouts of this season's entrants

BRIAN VERA
Hometown: Austin, Texas
Pro Record: 14-0 (9)
Age: 25
Fast Fact: Held Texas middle-weight title before moving up to 168

RHOSHII WELLS
Hometown: Las Vegas, Nevada
Pro Record: 18-2-2 (10)
Age: 30
Fast Fact: Won middleweight bronze medal at 1996 Olympics

RUBIN WILLIAMS
Hometown: Detroit, Michigan
Pro Record: 29-2-1 (16)
Age: 31
Fast Fact: Began pro career with 19 consecutive victories

Trainer Buddy McGirt poses with domino-playing fighters (from left to right) David Banks, Sakio Bika, Paul Smith, and Miguel Hernandez

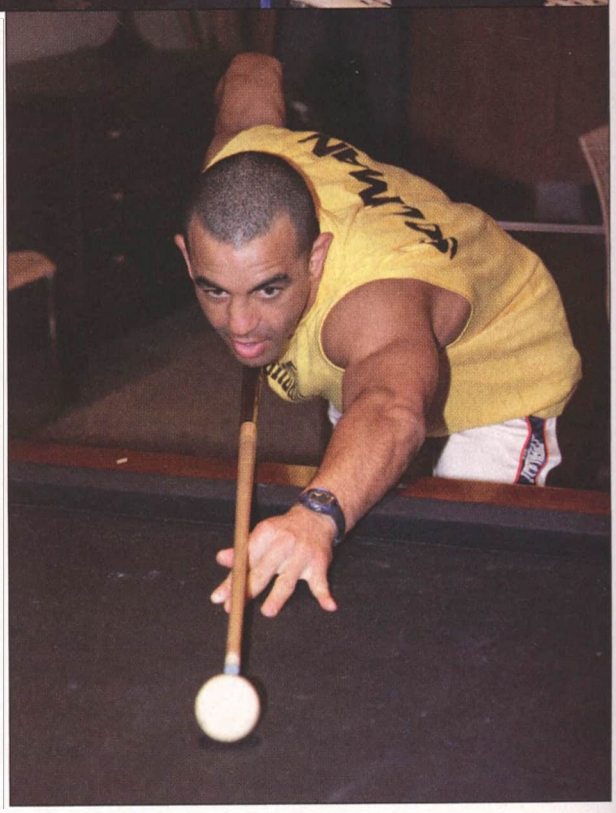
the show. Our discussion took place standing over a game of dominoes. In one corner, fighters were shooting pool, and in another, chef Raymond Valenzuela was cooking up a terrific feast.

It's not unheard of for fighters to end up competing with pals, but of course in this case the pals are closed in together as they are on so many other reality shows, except their ultimate competition concerns not goofy games, but beating each other senseless. This gives it a reality boost that's tough to duplicate by throwing two teams of hard-charging yuppies on a tropical island and asking them to vote on who stays and who goes.

I was thrilled to be there, but not all for the usual reasons. I rode in Jan's car, and after just a few minutes as a passenger in his teeny Toyota, I really didn't expect to reach the place alive. He drives the way the late Diego Corrales used to fight.

When I stumbled out of the car, I was ready to kiss the ground until I looked down at a urine-stained, cracked sidewalk littered with broken glass and all the other unspeakable bits of debris that had been collecting since about the time Jack Johnson kayoed Stanley Ketchel. This was not exactly Rodeo Drive. It was a warehouse district on the edge of downtown L.A.

With Jan lugging his photo gear behind me, I staggered over to the entrance to look for Emily, a public-relations person who was our designated liaison with the producers. Emily turned out to be drop-dead gorgeous, smart, wel-educated, and nice. Hollywood is crammed with young women like Emily, which raises the



Aussie Sam Soliman lines up a shot

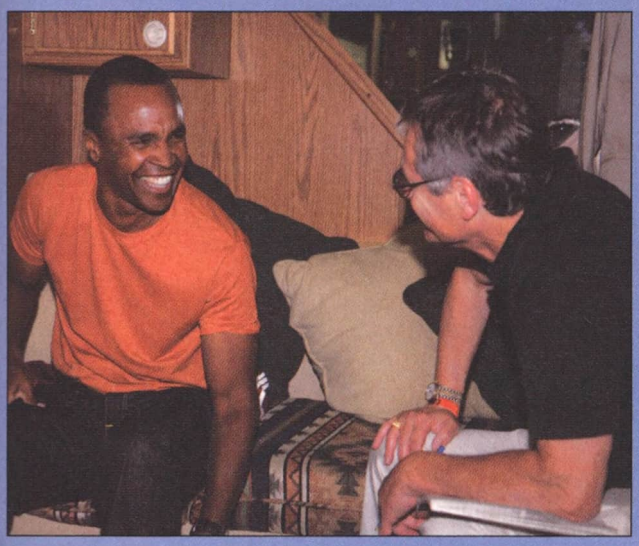
Guess what equipment company sponsors the show

Inside Sugar Ray's Trailer

Sugar Ray Leonard, who's been with the show from the beginning, talked with us as they applied his makeup. Tough guys aren't known for wearing cosmetics, so to make him feel less embarrassed, I told Ray that if I took my shoes off he'd see a set of perfectly painted toenails.

"I don't paint my toenails anymore," said Leonard's extremely cute daughter, who stays abreast of fashion. I asked her how old she was. "Eight," she replied. Girls grow up fast in Hollywood.

Leonard, who's had three years to think about the show's impact, pointed out that he's walked around with current champions and with fighters from the show, and among the public, "these guys are better known than the current champions." That's a two-edged sword, of course. It's bad the public isn't terribly familiar with the champs, but it's good that the show gets non-fans interested in the sport. Eventually, Leonard said, the show would feature heavyweights. That could inject some excitement into a division that could sorely use it.



Goldman has Sugar Ray cracking up

When it comes to boxing, there's nothing Hollywood about Leonard, so when I asked him whether anyone in this crop of guys could threaten, say, Joe Calzaghe or Mikkel Kessler, he changed the subject.

I repeated to him what colleague Brian Doogan had said to me a while ago, that though they compete in an unusually skilled, competitive division, none of the current welterweights could beat a prime Tommy Hearns. And Sugar Ray, as I'd reminded Doogan, kayoed Hearns. Leonard smiled and said he doesn't see any welter out there who's "the whole package." He thought Sugar Shane Mosley might be, he said, until he lost to Vernon Forrest.

Leonard wouldn't pile on champ Floyd Mayweather for coming on as a villain in the prefight publicity leading up to his fight with De La Hoya. "He's cocky, sure, but I was cocky myself."

Is he conscious that the money he made back in the 1970s and '80s is dwarfed now by fighters he could have defeated? Let's just say that when we mentioned De La Hoya made over $50-million losing to Mayweather, Leonard added precisely, "$54-million." So yes, he's keeping track. **—I.G.**

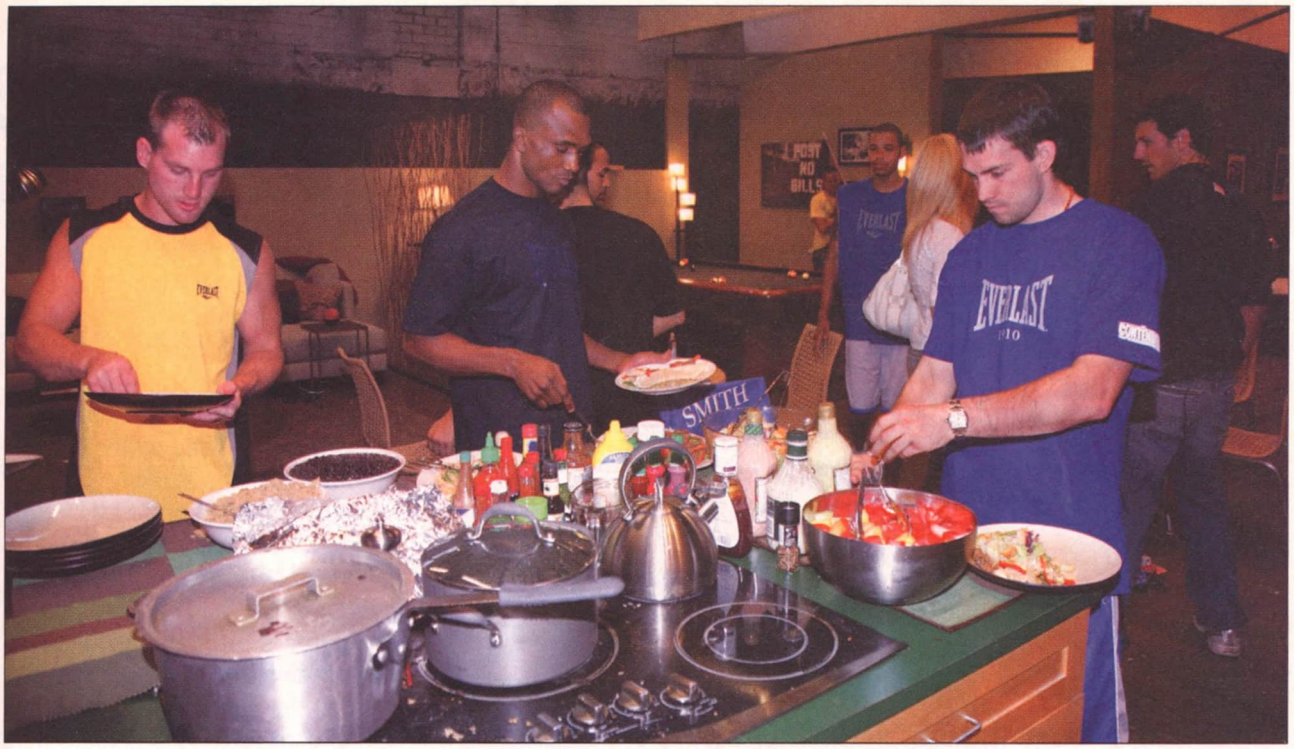
Fill in the blanks

great riddle of why creepy wenches like Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears become stars instead.

But we were there to get the story, not solve man's inhumanity to man. We were also there for Jan to pass out business cards because after emerging from the car he immediately transmogrified back into a mild-mannered photographer looking for more clients. I'm not saying whether there was or wasn't a kayo in the fight that night, but let's just say if there were, Jan would use the loser's supine state as an opportunity to slip him a card and make a sales pitch. Shortly after we arrived, I caught him trying to clinch a photo shoot with super-lawyer Henry Holmes, the man who negotiated the super-grill contract for George Foreman that made him richer than Tiger Woods. Not surprisingly, Holmes had pulled up to the entrance in a Bentley.

Anyway, back to the dormitory. In walked ex-champ Buddy McGirt. He and Jose "Pepe" Correa were training the yellow and blue teams, respectively. I'd read a publicity release from the show that quoted McGirt praising the show's facilities

Making your bed is apparently optional



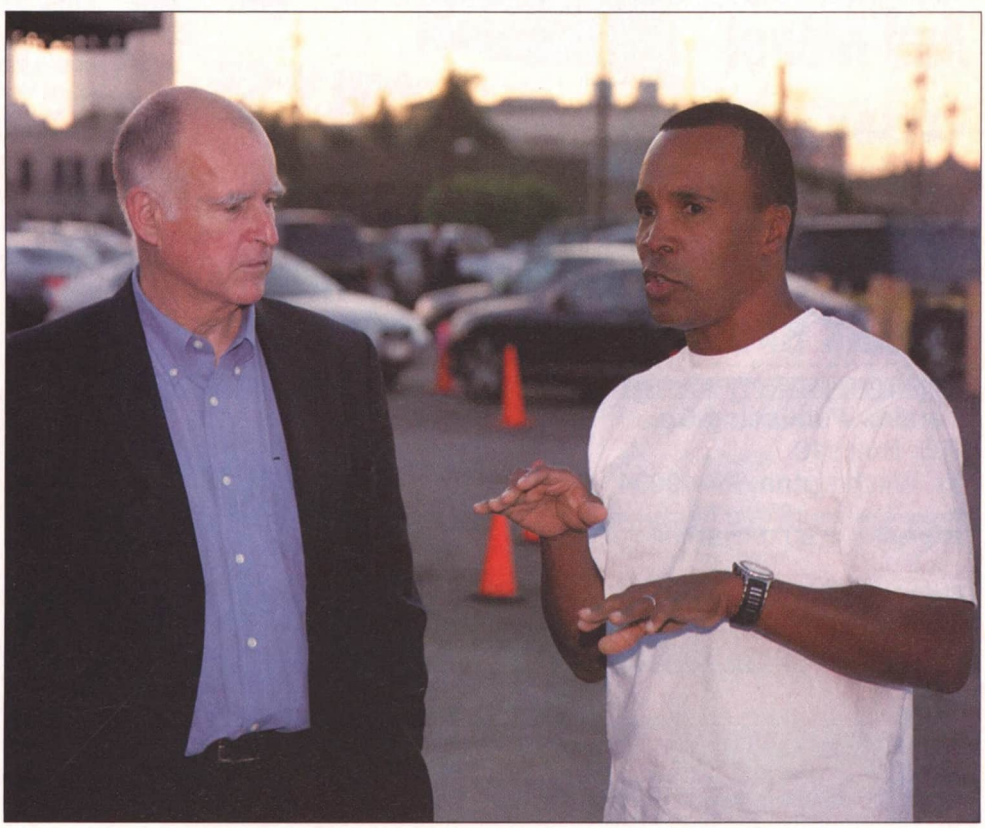
Fighters dig into the grub prepared by Chef Raymond Valenzuela

and saying everything was just peachy. As he picked up a pool cue to join the game, I asked him how he liked living in L.A. for a while.

"I'm a New Yorker," he growled. So much for the veracity of that press release. McGirt's a skilled player, but at the game's end he missed an easy shot on the eight ball and walked away rather than watch Max Alexander win.

These are all competitive people—the fighters, the trainers, and the show's backstage crew. Everybody had to beat the odds to get there, and no one wants to take a step back. The fighters all know that if they can make a splash on *The Contender*, it's like making a triple jump in checkers.

This bunch is once again a mix of rookies and veterans—like a triple-A baseball team—kids on the way up and graybeards past their physical peak but unwilling to accept it. As the producers intend, they add desperation to the recipe, and their dreams have some validity, because in boxing you can always be one punch away from the jackpot. With all the contestants in top shape, and with all of them in blue and yellow uniforms, you have to look hard to sort them out. But everyone knows who they are, just as everyone understands who the oddsmakers' favorites



Politico Jerry Brown hobnobs with Ray Leonard prior to the fight

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would be. On *The Contender*, life speeds up for all the fighters. Everything gets sorted out fast.

Jan and I both pulled military stints back around the War of 1812, and one thing we both noticed was that these guys didn't bother to make their bunks and nobody got on their case for it, which made the dorm look more like a dorm and less like a barracks. But that's normal in a boxing camp.

The guys didn't particularly like sitting around. They were eager to move ahead in the standings. "We all wanted to go first," one of them said of the elimination contests.

Valenzuela prepares gourmet food, no sugar, and light on the fats. The fighters all make weight, and they all rave about his cooking. Not even all the champions receive that kind of care, which the fighters were very much aware of.

For the fight itself, reality met reality show because the spectators, all of whom were wined and fed by a polished caterer, were coached into cheering like maniacs. Among big shots ringside was California Attorney General Jerry Brown, the man who's laughed off more than one political stake through the heart. Next to Sugar Ray Leonard sat Sugar Shane Mosley. Due on at least one future episode was Oscar De La Hoya, whose own boxing reality show on Fox had died a quick death, buried by *The Contender*. That's in keeping with Oscar's penchant for making partners out of those who defeat him, such as Bernard Hopkins and Mosley.

Inside the ring, the fighters and referee Pat Russell were very much for real. It wasn't known, though, whether sound effects would still be added to complement the landing of punches. Evidently they were still tinkering with questions about how much reality casual fans could take. When you get down to it, all spectator sports are entertainments that take our minds away from the cares of this world. Because there's a limit to how much reality anyone can stand. ■

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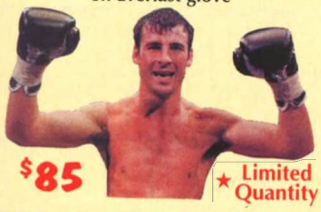
JOE CALZAGHE

Super Middleweight Champion on Everlast glove



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★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez
★ James "Buster" Douglas
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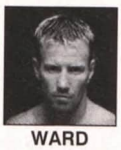

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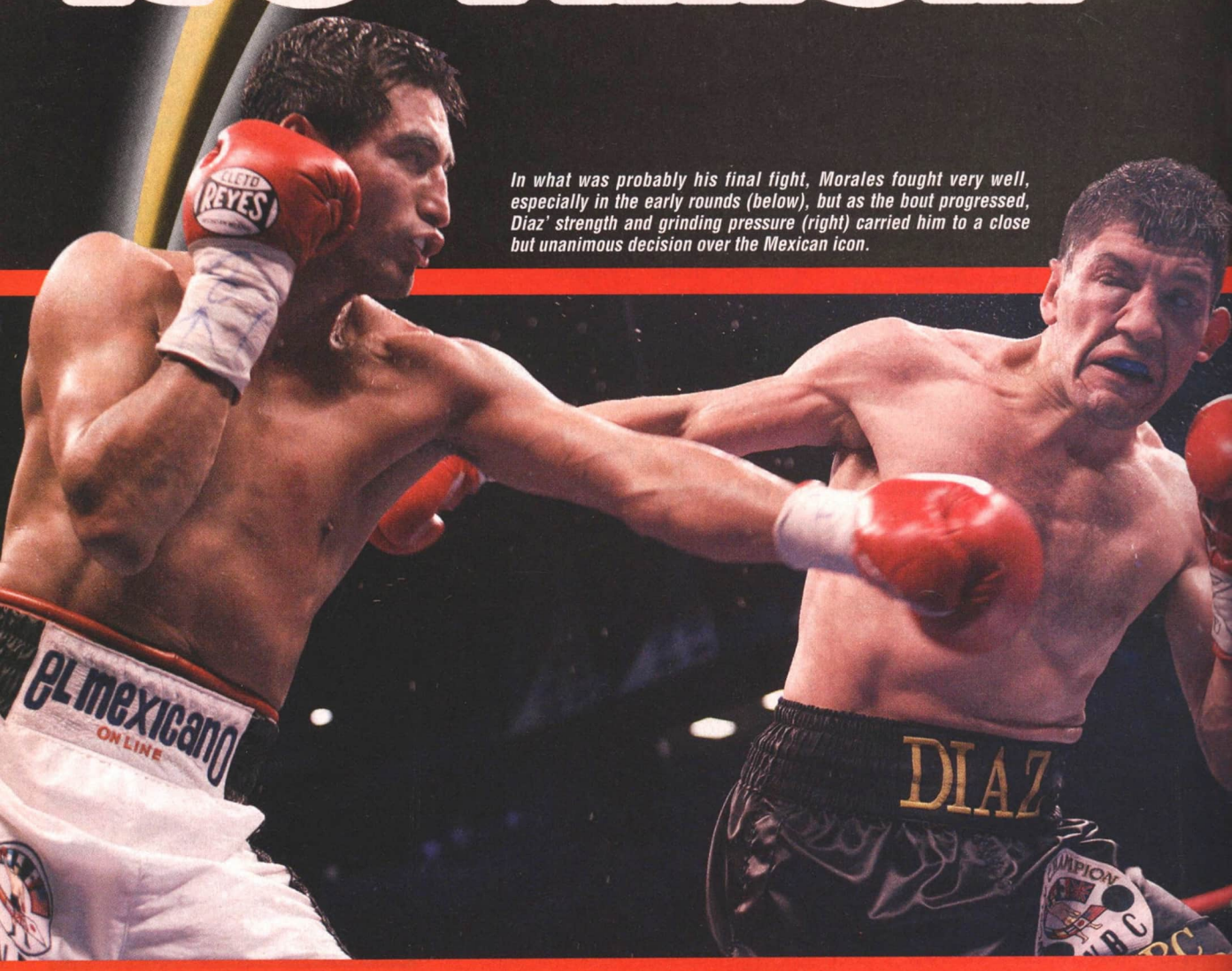


In what was probably his final fight, Morales fought very well, especially in the early rounds (below), but as the bout progressed, Diaz' strength and grinding pressure (right) carried him to a close but unanimous decision over the Mexican icon.

BUT IS MORALES READY TO CALL IT QUITS?

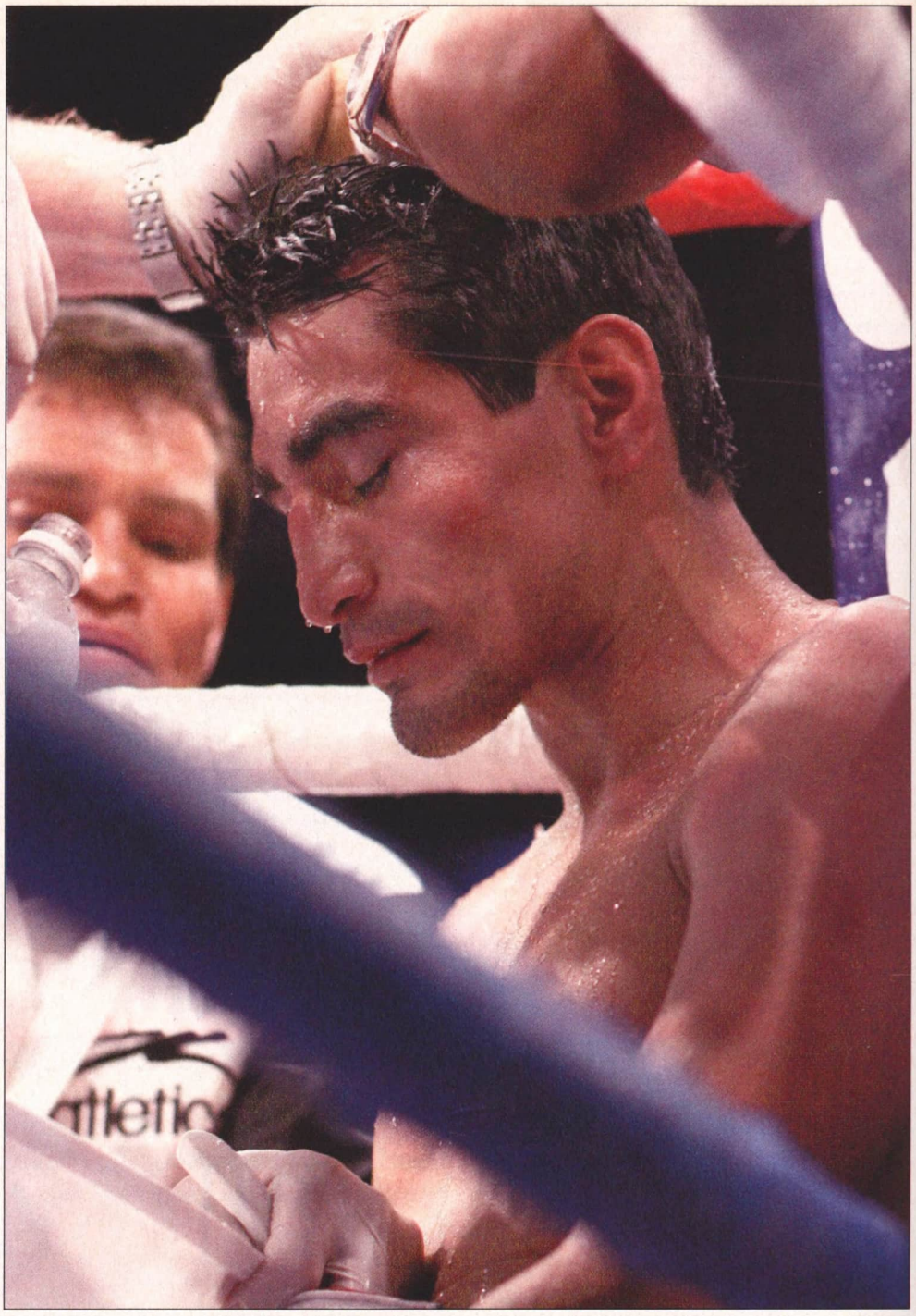
By William Dettloff

PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

It had to serve as some consolation to Erik Morales when, following his close loss to David Diaz in Rosemont, Illinois, on August 4, he received impassioned cheers upon leaving the ring, while Diaz' postfight TV interview was nearly drowned out by catcalls—in Diaz' hometown, no less. But this is the kind of send-off you get when you've given to the boxing game the better part of your youth, and, more importantly, incalculable pints of blood and countless breaths drawn in wonder.

We all knew going in that it probably would be Morales' last fight because he said beforehand that it would be. He said so afterward too, but before long there was talk maybe of a "farewell fight" in Mexico. Of course, it wasn't long ago that another Mexican icon, Julio Cesar Chavez, with the same promoter, fine-tuned the art of transforming a farewell fight into a "tour" that didn't end until he found he couldn't beat even the most ordinary midwestern, red-haired yokel. From the loins of such terrible truths are permanent retirements born.

Try as he might, Morales never could be Chavez, either in fighting prowess, popularity, or boorish conduct. (He never hid his contempt for rival Marco Antonio Barrera and a couple others, and some saw this as unsporting, but who said athletes have to love one another?) He lacked Chavez' sleek smugness and killer accuracy in the ring and his charisma outside it, but one needn't be everything to capture the hearts of Mexican fight fans. One has only to fight hard and be willing to spill some blood for the honor of his countrymen. So Morales never became "the next Chavez." Barrera came much closer and, indeed, that's what all the fighting was about. Still, his popularity among his countrymen equals that of, say, Fernando Vargas among Mexican-American fight fans, and that's more friends than any of us will ever have.



The wear and tear of 54 professional fights and the fact that he is fighting above his best weight took its toll on Morales, who admitted that he feels the punches more now than he did a few years ago.

Popularity aside, in a sense Morales' meeting with Diaz was a gift in return for his long years of steady and dutiful service to the fight game. The wrapping was Diaz' alphabet strap that, if won by Morales, would confer upon him the standing of the game's only Mexican fighter ever to win so-called "world" titles in four weight classes. That Diaz was then and remains at this writing the least formidable of the beltholders at lightweight (where Joel Casamayor is the world champ) is hardly happenstance: When you give a man a gold watch, you don't make him wrest it from the snout of a rabid wolverine. At the very most, you put it in a box that has every opening taped down in layers three deep so that in his final act as an employee, he still has to struggle a bit to get at it. Watching the struggle is the fun.

The question was if Morales, one of the great action fighters of the last decade, had any fun left in him, even against such a limited guy as Diaz, whose skill set is not as large as his

well of enthusiasm. As it turned out, he had plenty, as evidenced not only by the typically violent performance he rendered, and not just by the deep purple swelling that nearly enveloped Diaz' eye from underneath, but also by the margin of Diaz' victory.

Indeed, the scores of 114-113 (Heminio Quevas), 115-113 (Robert Hecko), and 115-112 (Nobuaki Uratani) were representative of the contest's taut, back-and-forth nature (The Ring scored it 115-115). We were introduced to the kind of fight it would be in the very first round when Diaz, 33-1-1 (17), having been emboldened by staggering Morales with a clubbing left, rushed in immaturely and ran into a pin-straight right that dropped him. It was reminiscent of that moment in Morales' fight three years earlier with Jesus Chavez, when Chavez too found out what can happen when you hurt Morales and then forget to tuck your chin.

But that was a fresher Morales, one who hadn't yet started feeling punches the way he admitted after the Diaz fight. Surely that accounted for the way he allowed the referee to toll the full count over him in his kayo loss to Manny Pacquiao in their rubber match, and it was the surest sign you could ask for that a fighter is at the end.

"I think this is going to be the last fight for me," Morales said after the loss to Diaz before a crowd of 9,735 at the Allstate Arena. "We tried to make an intelligent fight. Unfortunately, we had in front of us a fighter who was always putting pressure and throwing all kinds of punches. During the fight I hurt my hand, I hurt my elbow, and a couple of little things, but nothing will change the result. This is the last time you will see me in the ring."

Boxing is always hungry for happy endings and permanent retirement by Morales would qualify. But it almost seems a waste. Even aside from putting Diaz down in the first round, Morales, 48-6 (34), acquitted himself very well, winning most of the early rounds and then the later ones too with sharp, straight punches from the outside that frequently befuddled the squatter, stronger Diaz. It was only when he got inside Morales' famously skinny arms that Diaz was able to get any business done, and even then it was no easy task.

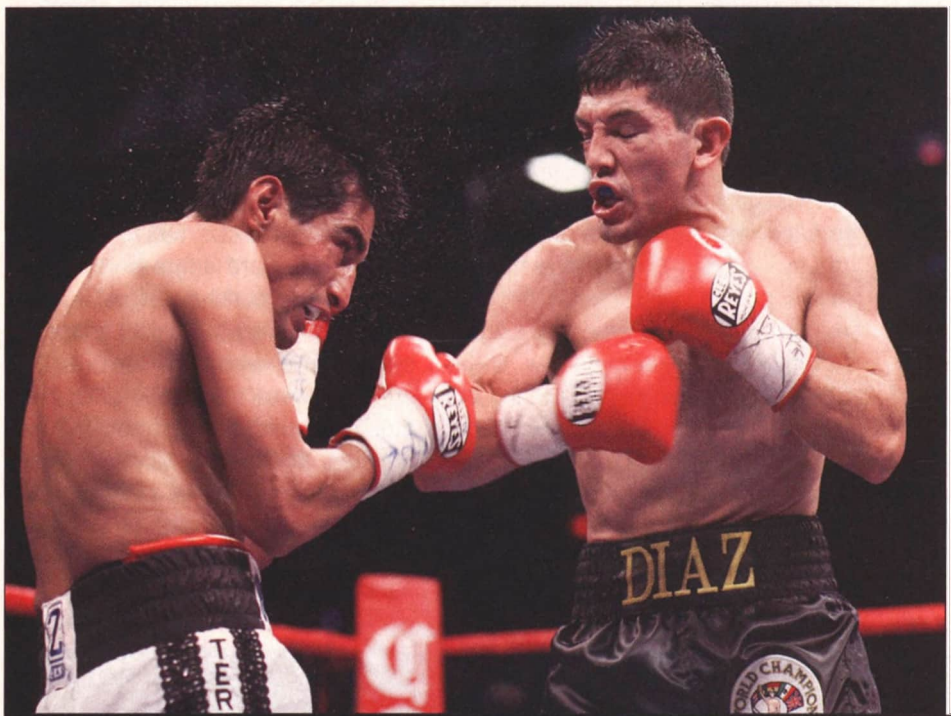
After three rounds driven primarily by Diaz' adrenaline, the fight's basic parameters established themselves in the fourth: Diaz, 133¾, would be busier and more aggressive, throwing far more punches. Morales, 135, would be more economical and measured, and when he landed, his punches were more telling. Outside that first-round left, Diaz couldn't hurt Morales. In contrast, Morales' signature straight rights, as perfectly executed as ever, stung Diaz whenever they landed cleanly. But Diaz was fresher and stronger throughout, and

Morales made Diaz pay for his aggression, as he does here, countering off the ropes with a left hook. But although he is actually a few months older than Morales, Diaz has been in nowhere near as many wars and was the fresher fighter.

while Morales seemed noticeably winded by the eighth, Diaz never seemed appreciably gassed. His surge in the final round was notable compared to the way Morales, in the fight's final seconds, swayed along the ropes with only his stubbornness keeping him upright. The decision, while unpopular in the sense that it denied a beloved fighter a final victory, was difficult to debate. Given the popular belief that in better days Morales would have handled Diaz easily, Morales' retirement, should it last, is, by most observers, welcome.

"He has a family and they allowed him to fulfill his destiny in boxing. Now he shouldn't be selfish about it, and just go enjoy what he accomplished in the ring," said former junior featherweight champion Paulie Ayala, whom Morales decisioned over 12 mostly one-sided rounds in November 2002. Ayala retired at the age of 34, right about on time, after Barrera stopped him in 10 rounds in June '04. So he knows the territory. And he knows what fighters can go through, particularly young ones like Morales who is just, impossibly, 30 years old. But he believes Morales' retirement can be successful, which in this game means permanent.

"I don't see Eric needing to fight again," Ayala said. "He'll



"We tried to make an intelligent fight. Unfortunately, we had in front of us a fighter who was always putting pressure and throwing all kinds of punches," said Morales of Diaz' fervent attack that eventually carried him to a narrow victory.

Both men show signs of their grueling battle at the postfight press conference. Morales said he was retiring, and most of his many fans hope the pride of Tijuana sticks to his decision. There was, however, talk of a "farewell fight" in Mexico.

want to because all fighters want to. It's in our blood. But it seems like he's got his faculties and everything is in order in his home, so he should just go enjoy what he's accomplished. He's already done more than thousands of other fighters have done: He's won world titles, beaten a ton of great fighters, and made millions of dollars. Now he should focus that drive on other things. I hear he's going to promote fighters, and that's great because it means he'll still be able to participate in the sport he loves."

Ayala recalls his fight against Morales as one of the more painful of his career. "He boxed really well. He has exceptionally long arms and he used them well. He surprised me with his boxing skills, not just his slugging. I had to get hit to get inside, and he hit extremely hard, much harder than Barrera, who was very accurate. Morales hit me more times than I wanted to get hit, and it hurt. I was the kind of fighter, when I got hit I'd say, 'Come on!' But a few times he had me saying 'Ouch!'"

Morales left many fighters saying that and worse, and his record will be the only evidence needed to get him inducted into the Hall of Fame, presumably five years from now. That he lost four of his last five fights will not be as important as the names of at least two of the men who beat him: Pacquiao and Barrera, who, combined, account for four of the six losses on his ledger, and who also will join him in Canastota when their times come. The losses to Zahir Raheem and Diaz will easily be discounted by virtue of their occurrence at lightweight, a class in which Morales never was sufficiently strong enough to succeed. That Morales lost four out of six to the best fighters of the era in Barrera and Pacquiao is not lost on everyone. There are those who acknowledge Morales for his entertainment value, but doubt his overall worth.

Don Fraser, who promoted most of the biggest fights the lower weight stars of the 1970s on the West Coast, doesn't believe Morales could have stayed with any of the bigger draws of the period.

"Morales was always a real good action fighter," the legendary promoter said, "but I wouldn't put him up there with [Bobby] Chacon or [Ruben] Olivares or [Chucho] Castillo. Those guys were real good fighters and fought against other very good fighters in a better era. Morales just isn't as good as those guys. He would have done well against a guy like Jesus Pimental, whose manager was good at getting him guys he could beat, but every time he fought a guy that could fight, he lost."

There is little doubt that there were many fighters more skilled than Morales and many were better pure punchers. "El Terrible" won with good skills and good power, but mostly too with a stubborn arrogance that all the best athletes have. It makes them believe they have merely to be themselves to be better than the competition, that by virtue of their very being, they are superior. That's why it never mattered much to Morales when he came out of a fight looking like the sorriest loser, all bruised and lumped up and bloody. He won just because he was better, just because he was who he was, and he didn't need any damned gold watch to tell him that. And neither did we. ■

Ricky Hatton

"I'll Be On Mayweather Like A Rash"

It is almost 2½ years since Ricky Hatton emerged out of his fortress at the Manchester Evening News Arena in the north of England as the dominant junior welterweight in the world, winning the world title from Australia's Kostya Tszyu in June 2005 and defending it successfully against Colombian Carlos Maussa, five months later. These victories made him THE RING's 2005 Fighter of the Year, the first British boxer to win the award. The heightened expectation increased the sense of disappointment when the 28-year-old "Hitman" from Manchester failed to build on his accomplishment. He picked up minor belts against Luis Collazo and Juan Urango, but his career did not appear to be headed in the anticipated direction. Then, this past June, he knocked out Mexico's Jose Luis Castillo and an encounter with Floyd Mayweather, boxing's pound-for-pound king, was announced one month later. Suddenly, Hatton was the kind of presence again that he should always have been.

Potentially, his bout with world welterweight champion Mayweather could be Roger Federer-Rafael Nadal, sans the refinement of rackets and a net to separate the antagonists. In the ring, Hatton, 43-0 (31), is a similar type of animal to the swashbuckling Spaniard on a clay tennis court: powerful, unremitting, ruthless, and fearless. As an ambassador for his sport, Mayweather has some way to go before he matches Federer's class, but his professional skills are formidable. The 30-year-old Las Vegas resident is a beautiful composite of nerve, fluid movement, and clinical precision. Only Castillo in their first meeting in April 2002 (Mayweather prevailed on points by a wide margin eight months later) and Oscar De La Hoya have pushed "Pretty Boy Floyd" to a point that has threatened his imperious 38-0 (24) record. They will fight on December 8 at the welterweight limit of 147 pounds, seven pounds above Hatton's best weight of 140, an issue that THE RING's junior welterweight champion addressed, along with many others, in a revealing interview in the first week of August with Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent. Doogan reports:

"Between fights, Hatton has become a popular addition to the after-dinner speaking circuit in Britain and it is easy to see why. He is engaging when he talks, has a charismatic personality, he is always himself, and his accomplishments in the ring have made him one of the most successful British sportsmen of all-time. Naturally, his thoughts on fighting Mayweather dominated the discussion, and the clear impression he left was that he will be fiercely motivated to pull off the kind of shock win that few people outside of Britain believe is within his capabilities. Hatton fancies his chances because he believes he has the style and the will to sow doubt in Mayweather. Whether he can pull it off is another matter, but it is unlikely to be a disappointment watching him try."

THE RING: How excited are you about the fact that you'll be facing Floyd Mayweather on December 8 in Las Vegas?

Ricky Hatton: I'm incredibly excited about the prospect of getting in the ring and facing Floyd Mayweather. There is simply no bigger fight out there, two unbeaten world champions, one of whom is recognized as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world. For me, this is the right time for this fight to happen; I'm convinced of that. The Castillo fight showed that I'm back to my best, so this is the moment to capitalize.

THE RING: Your dad revealed that the fight was 18 months in the making. Was there a time when you thought that the opportunity might be gone after Mayweather announced his retirement in May when he beat Oscar De La Hoya and suggested that only a rematch with De La Hoya could tempt him back into the ring?

RH: After my performances against Luis Collazo last year and Juan Urango in January of this year and what Mayweather said after his fight with Oscar, yeah, I probably did think that I might have lost my chance. I wasn't good enough against Collazo and Urango, but I've always known in myself that I perform better when the challenge

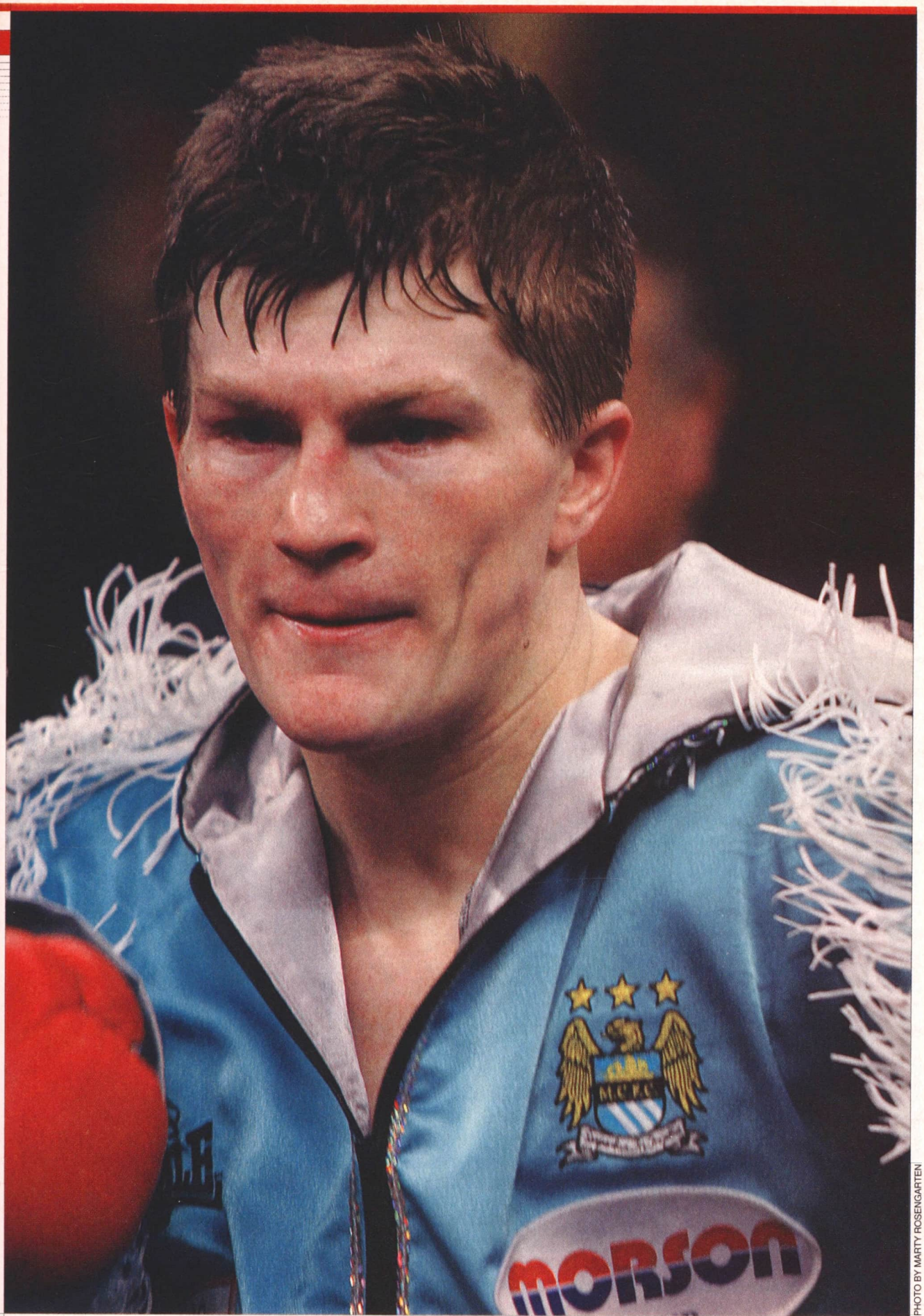


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

is greater. Many people were suggesting that I'd had a lot of tough fights and, because I like to have a drink or two and enjoy myself when I'm not in training, that it was all beginning to catch up with me. Well, I put that theory to rest in my fight against Castillo, and the way I look at it is this: Floyd Mayweather has dominated every opponent he's fought expect two, Castillo in their first fight and De La Hoya. The common denominator is that they are both aggressive fighters, but, still, I wouldn't say that they were able to put Mayweather under the kind of pressure that I will be applying from the opening bell. I like to think that I am Mr. Pressure. Floyd has amazing ability. I'm the first to admit it, so long as he has time and space to show his ability. But that isn't necessarily going to be in my plan.

THE RING: We'll discuss how you intend to approach the fight with Mayweather, but the fights against Collazo and Urango—and you've acknowledged this yourself—did not showcase Ricky Hatton at his best or anywhere near it. For the Collazo fight, you moved up to welterweight and your performance suffered. It just didn't appear that you were strong enough at the weight to be the kind of force in that division that you've been at junior welterweight, which could be ominous now that you're about to encounter a fighter who has competed as a junior middleweight.

RH: I'm man enough to admit that I wasn't at my best against either Collazo or Urango, but the fact is that I didn't have the time to prepare properly for the move up to welterweight against Collazo, just six or seven weeks. At that time, I didn't even want to move up to welterweight; it was just the situation I was in. The date was set, my opponent [Juan Lazcano, who was due to challenge for the world junior welterweight title] pulled out and the only opponent HBO would approve was Luis Collazo for the WBA welterweight belt. When I have to make 140 pounds at the weigh-in, I come into the ring at 152, 154, but I came in at 160-plus that night because I tried to make myself as big as Collazo. Those six pounds more than normal caused me to lose my speed. My foot and head movement suffered too, and I felt sluggish all night. Even when I was warming up on the pads in the dressing room, Billy [Graham, Hatton's trainer] noticed that my footwork and my movement in general weren't the same. I could have knocked out a horse probably with the added poundage, but I was too big to get the shot in. I'm a light welterweight, not a welterweight, but you learn by your mistakes and it's a good thing that it happened, because maybe I'd have been making the mistake against Floyd if I hadn't fought Collazo.

THE RING: The criticism of your performance against Urango revolved mainly around excessive clinching, which marred the fight as a spectacle from the mid-point. How do you respond to that criticism?

PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton believes that De La Hoya had the proper fight plan when he pressured Mayweather during the first half of their May 2007 fight. But while De La Hoya faded the second half, Hatton plans to stay right on top of "Pretty Boy" for as long as the fight lasts.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

In his only other start at 147 pounds, 140-pound champion Hatton struggled to outpoint Luis Collazo over 12 rounds in May 2006. This has caused some to wonder if moving back up to welterweight in order to fight Mayweather will again put Ricky at a disadvantage.

RH: It annoys me a bit when I read these stories referring to Ricky "Hook And Hold" Hatton. Inside fighting is a talent in its own right. There's an art to working in close and finding the gaps to land your shots. It's as much of an art as being able to box on the outside, and I hope the referee is just as respectful of my style of fighting as he is of Floyd's and allows me to go about my business the way I would want to on December 8. I hope he lets us fight. I like to get in the zone, get in close and hurt people. I don't want to hold them. I'm not a wrestler, as some people are trying to portray me. That's not my style at all. Against Kostya Tszyu, I did a lot of work in close and that performance has been described as one of the best by a British fighter ever. It's not me saying that, it's other people, so I just don't see how I can be criticized for my style now.

Roberto Duran and Julio Cesar Chavez were two of the greatest fighters ever and they loved to work inside, picking their spots and hurting people in close. Sometimes you have to use your hands and arms to find the gaps and that's what's going on in there, technical inside fighting. I just don't get it when they go on about the hitting and holding. Maybe there was a lot of clinching in the Urango fight, but I wasn't at my best and I didn't put on the performance I wanted to, but that's not how I normally go about my business.

The Ring: Did you expect more from Castillo in terms of how he went about his business on June 23?

RH: I think it was more a case of what I allowed him to do. When I challenged Kostya Tszyu for the world light welterweight title in June 2005, everyone expected me to get beaten. I stopped him after 11 rounds and, supposedly, he was past it. The same with Castillo. Well, if Castillo was past his best and I had labored over putting him away, then there might be grounds to criticize, but I did the job I had to do and the bodyshot I put him away with would have finished most fighters. I wasn't tickling him with that left hook.

The Ring: Tickling will not be part of your strategy against Mayweather

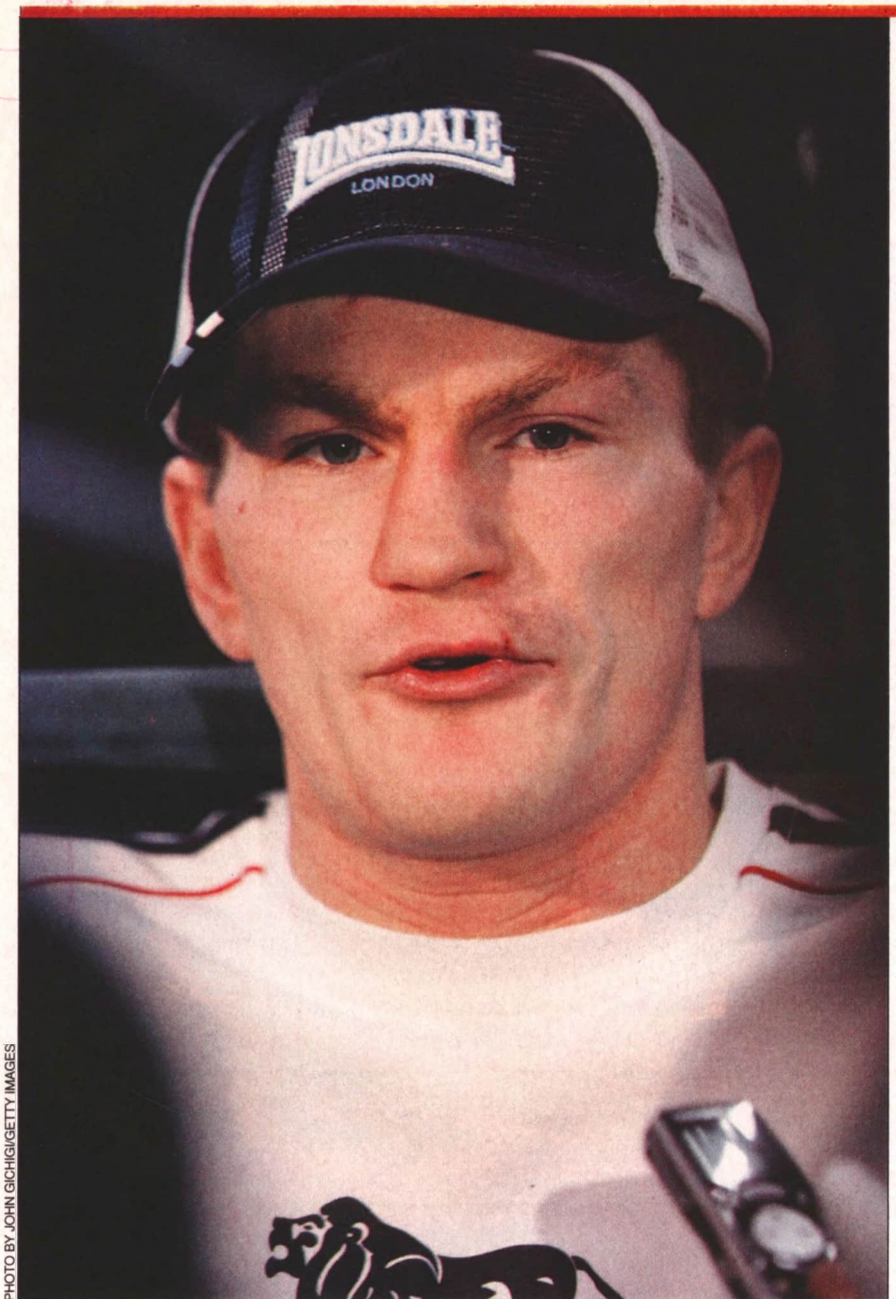


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

"It annoys me a bit when I read these stories referring to Ricky 'Hook And Hold' Hatton. Inside fighting is a talent in its own right. There's an art to working in close and finding the gaps to land your shots."

I'm sure. How do you assess his capabilities and what will you do to negate the advantages he would appear to have in terms of speed and movement, his versatility, and all-round boxing skills?

RH: A lot of people have me as the underdog and I know I'm the underdog, but it doesn't bother me one bit. Mayweather's speed, his movement, reflexes, and good defense give him an edge over the vast majority of fighters. Technically, there's no better boxer in the world today, and I appreciate his skills, even if he's not my cup of tea. I don't sit up until four in the morning when I'm at home in Manchester so that I can watch him fight live. I stick the tape in and go to bed and get up the next morning because he'd probably just send me to sleep. This notion that he's unbeatable, I really don't buy into at all. Up until the seventh or eighth round of his fight with Oscar I was thinking to myself, *Floyd, you're going to have to pull your finger out here.* Then, for some reason, De La Hoya stopped doing what he was doing to stay ahead in the fight and Mayweather was allowed back in.

But he wouldn't enjoy that luxury against me. I'll be on him like a rash and I won't die off. I honestly believe I'll be his worst nightmare, I really do. I realize that he could be my worst nightmare, but I look at the guys he's beaten recently and I'm not exactly filled with trepidation. I'm not taking anything away from his style, ability, or his record, but the truth is that a guy like DeMarcus Corley, everyone at the top level has beaten him. Zab Judah was knocked out in two rounds by Kostya Tszyu and he'd also been beaten by Carlos Baldomir, who had lost nine times before Floyd won the welterweight title from him. I've taken stick for some of the guys I've fought, but where are the guys in the light welterweight or welterweight divisions Floyd has fought who are any better? I don't really see it myself.

THE RING: He believes that he's destined to be remembered as an all-time great. You're a student of the sport, so where would you say that he is among the pantheon of greats?

RH: Kostya Tszyu was number two in a lot of the pound-for-pound lists at the time I stopped him, but Floyd is universally regarded as number one and he's won titles in five weight divisions, so from my point of view this is a bigger fight for me to win, without question. Beating Floyd Mayweather would be my greatest accomplishment by far. But it's important for Floyd too.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

We're not sure how Hatton did playing the slot machines in Las Vegas, but he surely hit the jackpot by securing his multimillion-dollar bout with Mayweather, which will be the Englishman's biggest payday to date.

I've always wanted to test myself against the best and if he wants to be regarded as an all-time great, he needs to do the same. He's come through the weight divisions, but he didn't beat the man at light welter. Kostya Tszyu was number one in the world, not Arturo Gatti. He may want to be mentioned in the same breath as guys like Sugar Ray Leonard and Roberto Duran and Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Tommy Hearns and all the other greats, but, in my opinion, he hasn't done enough yet.

THE RING: Your paths crossed at the second Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins fight, I believe. You were both ringside at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas and the vibe wasn't too friendly.

RH: I went to shake his hand and he kind of blanked me. He didn't extend his hand at all. He was walking to his seat and he said something like, "I'm going to knock you out." I just thought, *Well, please yourself, you so-and-so.* I didn't lose any sleep over it, however, and it was nothing personal, but it's a question of respect. He's got a reputation for disrespecting everybody, so I didn't take it to heart because he did the same to me.

THE RING: As a person, what do you think of him?

RH: I'd like to read the book first before I make any comment because the truth is that I don't know him well. Maybe he's a nice guy when he's at home with his kids and when he's around his mum, but it seems like everybody I've spoken to says that he could show more class. Muhammad Ali was the master of hyping up a fight and doing the talking, but he always did it with a twinkle in his eye and a little class. Floyd doesn't seem capable of that, but, like I say, I'll wait till I read the book before making a judgment.

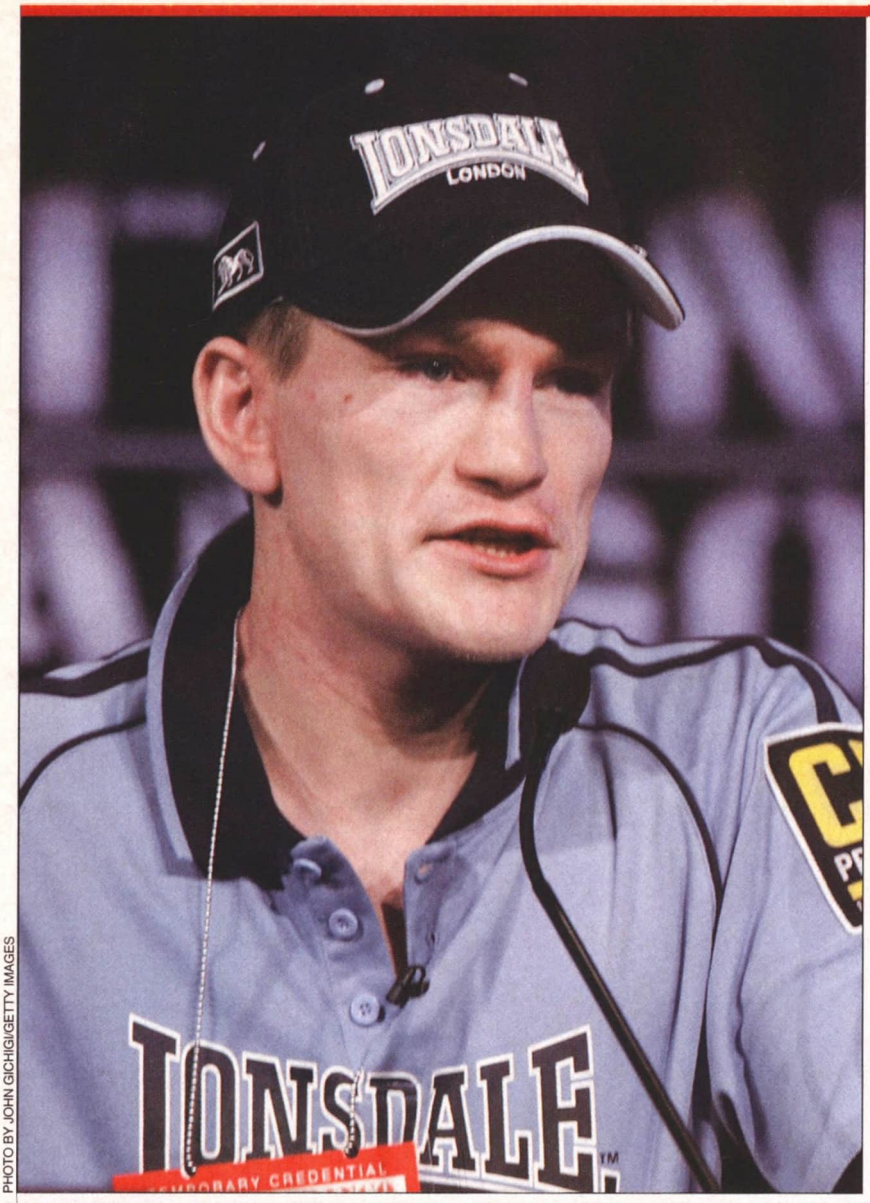


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

"Mayweather may want to be mentioned in the same breath as guys like Sugar Ray Leonard and Roberto Duran and Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Tommy Hearns and all the other greats, but in my opinion, he hasn't done enough yet."

THE RING: Did you watch the *24/7* documentaries ahead of the De La Hoya fight, which gave some insight into his personality, in particular his fractious relationship with his father?

RH: I did and I actually felt sorry for him. I'm very close to my family and the situation he's in must be very upsetting. If I want to speak to my mum or my dad, I could nearly shout across the garden and they'd hear me; that's how close we are to one another. We're incredibly close as a family and it's one of the things that gives me the greatest amount of pleasure, the fact that my family is with me to share in all of this, to see my name up in lights along The Strip in Las Vegas. When I go away on a cruise, my parents, my brother, Matthew, and my friends come with me. That's how it's always been and that's how it is still. My dad looks after my career and we speak all the time, whereas Floyd doesn't seem to have any kind of relationship with his father, who has no involvement in his career. That's sad because, to me, there's nothing more important than family. I actually thought that he came across better in the documentary because of the way the situation with his dad and his uncle played out. I'm not making any judgment, but it's different, shall we say, to the way me and my family act, and the thing is that we're exactly the same when the cameras are on or off. We're just the same way we've always been with one another and that's a healthy situation.

THE RING: Bob Arum, who co-promoted your fight with Castillo, seemed almost surprised by your closeness to your family and your down-to-earth demeanor, and also the way you interact so easily with fans and people in general.

RH: Maybe it's because of the way I fight that people who don't know me might think I'm a head case. I surprise people when they meet me. In the ring, I'm aggressive, a bit of a roughhouse, but once the gloves are off and I'm out with my friends, I'm a very laid back bloke. I don't think I should get any credit for being nice to people, because that's just the way I was brought up to be, so that's the way I am. It costs nothing to be polite. The Hattersley Estate, where I'm from, on the outskirts of Manchester, is infamous for the Moors murders (committed by Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, who killed five children between 1963 and 1965). In fact, when you walked out the back of the New Inn pub (once owned by Ray Hatton), you came straight to where they lived and where some of the murders actually happened. The house is no longer there, but everyone knows where it was. Hyde is also the place where Harold Shipman (the doctor who became the

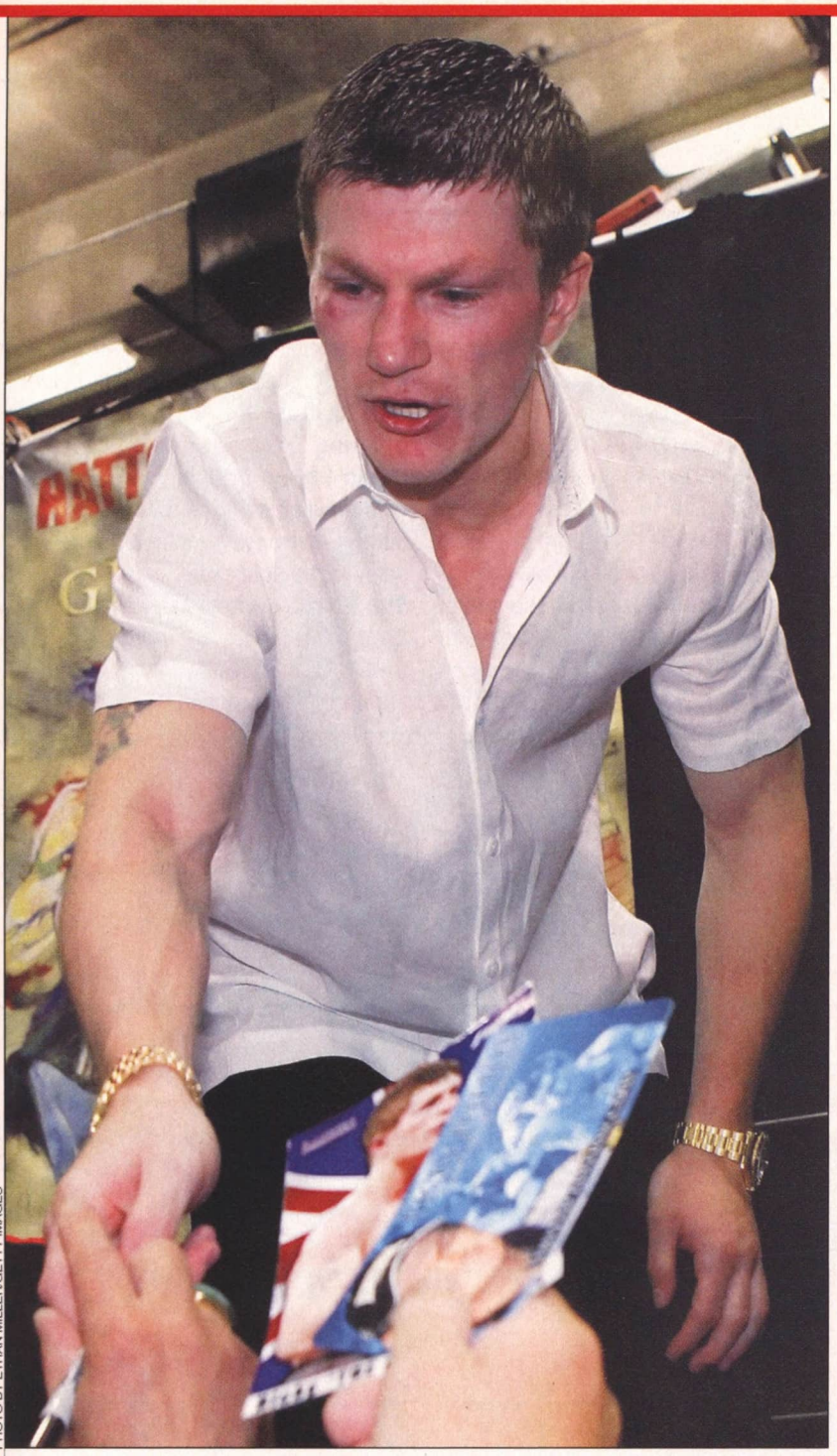


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Despite his rough-and-tumble style inside the ring, it would be difficult to find a fighter who is more fan-friendly than Hatton, pictured signing autographs after his June victory over Jose Luis Castillo.

most notorious serial killer in British history, killing up to 215 patients before his arrest and conviction in 2000) had his clinic, so we've had more than our fair amount of bad news from around here. I've always wanted to generate better news for the area through my boxing career.

THE RING: Collecting your Member of the British Empire award recently at Buckingham Palace must have been a special honor and special day in your life. What did Prince Charles say to you as he presented you with your medal?

RH: It was fantastic, one of the best days of my life. Just to be invited to Buckingham Palace was an honor in itself, but to be presented with the MBE by Prince Charles and to hear

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RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF

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Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

4748/05.06

him say that he saw my fight against Castillo on the TV and that I deserved all the credit that comes my way was a sensational feeling. It made me very proud, particularly with my parents being there and my girlfriend, Jennifer [Dooley]. The actual experience was quite nerve-wracking really. I was more nervous going up to collect my medal than I've ever been getting into the ring. Here I am, a lad from the Hattersley Estate, and I'm rubbing shoulders with royalty and all kinds of important people. My best mates now are guys who were my best mates on our council estate 20 years ago. When I celebrate winning a fight, I still go back to the New Inn pub with people I've been around since I was a boy. I'm not a big-time Charlie and I never will be, so going to the Palace was out of the ordinary for me, a different experience entirely and one I'll remember for the rest of my days, very special.

THE RING: Your girlfriend was at the Castillo fight and you appear to be very happy together.

RH: We have been together for a few years, we live together now, and we're getting on really well. Jennifer gets on really well also with my son, Campbell, and we're very happy.

THE RING: Some photographs appeared in a British tabloid newspaper of you and some friends on holiday after the Castillo fight and you seemed to be—how shall we put it—enjoying yourselves on the town, not that there's anything wrong with that. But does it bother you when you're photographed on holiday, slightly the worse for wear and the idea is to show you in a slightly unflattering light?

RH: A lot of fighters shut themselves away, but I'm not like that. My gym is always open and there are people in it every day, watching me train, a lot of kids, which makes me happy because they're happy. I'm not as wild as I used to be when I'm away from the gym. Jennifer's played a part in that maybe, but I think it's more about growing older and more mature. When I'm on holiday, I still like to enjoy myself and I think I'm entitled to do that in my own way and not necessarily in the public eye.

THE RING: You mentioned your son, Campbell, a little earlier. He was six years old in January. Does he watch you box and would you allow

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Regardless of his success, Hatton has stayed very much the same person he was before hitting the big time. Even so, he has earned the right to drive an expensive automobile, such as the one he's posing with here, complete with a vanity license plate.

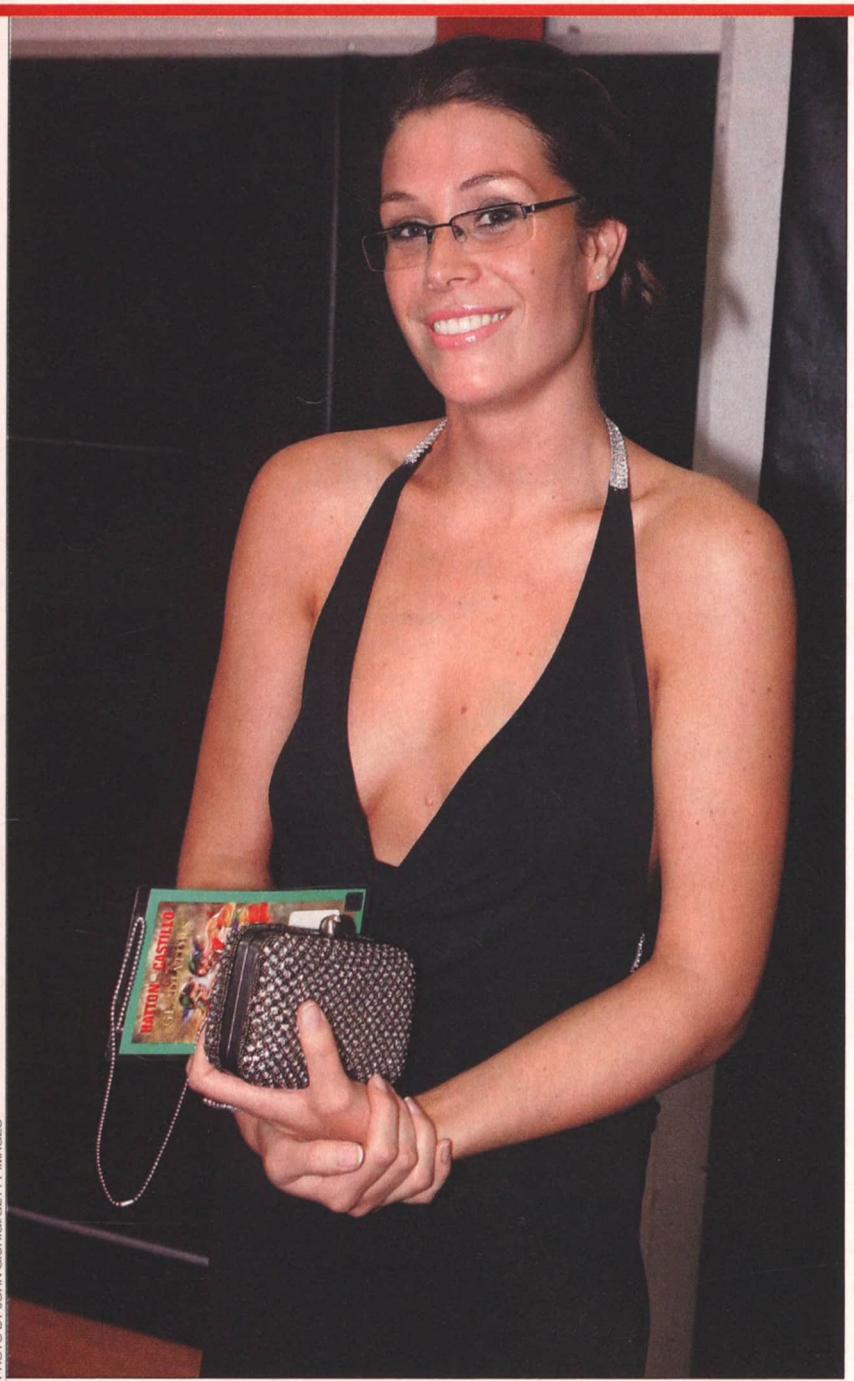

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton's girlfriend, Jennifer Dooley, was at the Castillo fight in Las Vegas to see her man score a one-punch knockout. She also accompanied Ricky to Buckingham Palace when he was presented the MBE by Prince Charles.

him to box if he wished to follow in your footsteps one day?

RH: I'd rather he became a footballer, Manchester City, of course, my team. I wouldn't really want to see him box. To be honest, I'm not sure how my mum and dad can watch me from ringside. It must be torture for them, but they're always there. Campbell doesn't watch me box live, but he gets to the see the tape once the fight is over. He comes into the gym and watches me train and he punches the bags himself a little bit. I've even had little belts made for him so that he can wear the same belts as me, and he loves that. I see him practically every day and I have a good relationship with his mum, Claire, so that Campbell has all that he needs. But, no, I wouldn't want him to start into boxing some day himself. I'll take the punches and he can do something safer.

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THE RING: Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy will promote your fight with Mayweather, but would you work with your former promoter, Frank Warren, in the future? An out-of-court settlement to a libel action against your father recently included an agreement that you would sit down to discuss working together again at some point. What is the likelihood?

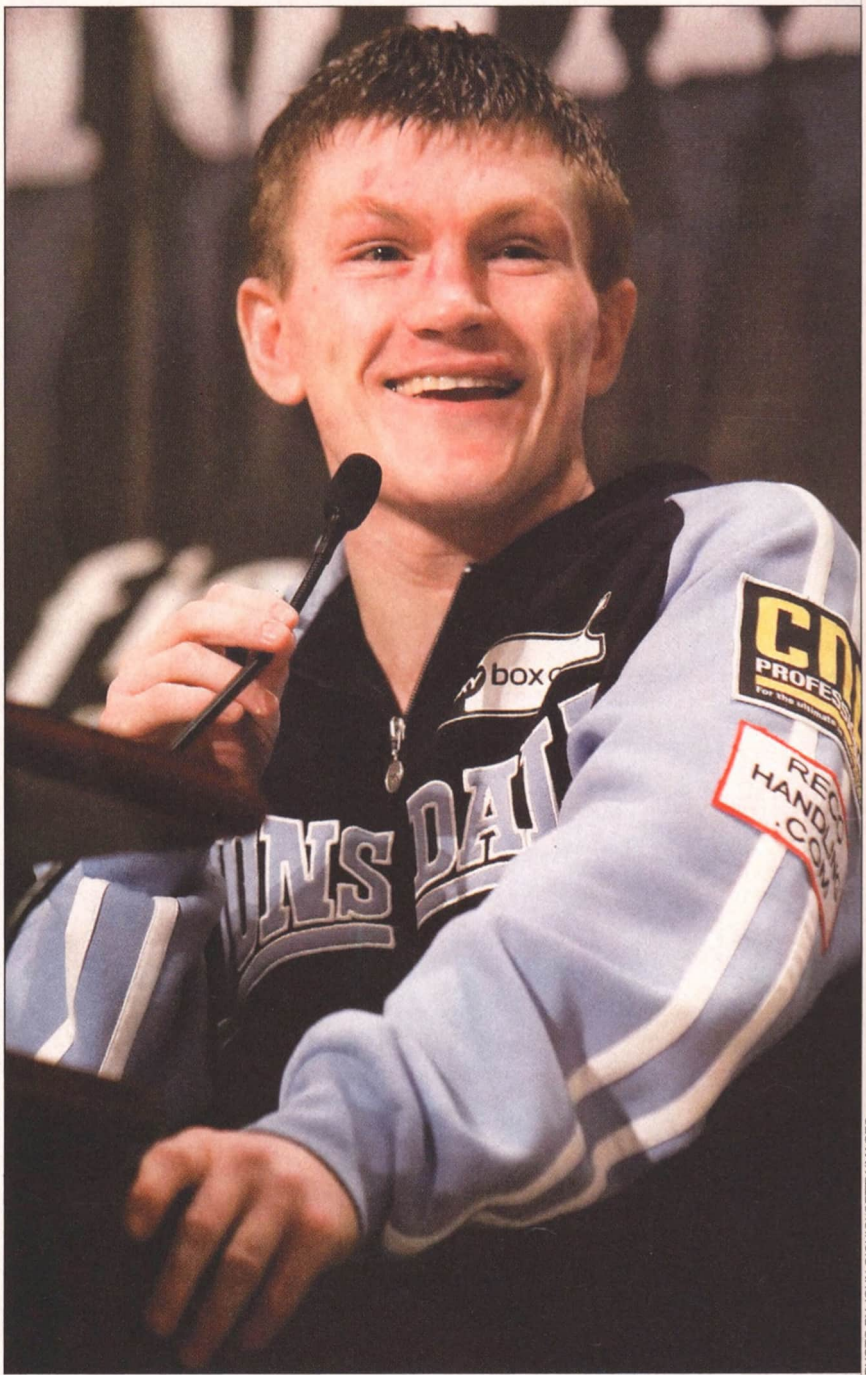

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

"I chuckled when I read about how Mayweather was going to hit me in my big, fat beer belly ... I don't think he'll stand in front of me, I think he'll run for the hills."

RH: My dad did meet with Frank Warren a few weeks ago, but we obviously signed to do the Mayweather fight. Obviously, a lot of things happened [between Warren and the Hattons] which hurt me, and we decided to go our own separate ways, but they say, "Never say never," so we'll have to see.

THE RING: Have you thought at all about your future after Mayweather? Could it be your last fight?

RH: It's hard to say because I don't know how I'm going to feel after the fight. I might feel completely satisfied if I was to win, or I might lose and feel so dejected that I'd hang up the gloves. I really don't know, but I won't make any hasty decisions and I certainly haven't made any decision yet. That would be the wrong frame of mind to have heading into a fight like this, so I haven't really thought about it.

THE RING: A lot of things have been said between yourself and Mayweather already. You told Max Kellerman in the ring after the Castillo fight that "you saw more action in four rounds [tonight] than you've seen from Floyd throughout his whole career." Were you trying to goad some reaction out of Mayweather or perhaps even provoke him out of retirement?

RH: I'm not a disrespectful person, so what I said wasn't meant to be disrespectful at all. If anything, you're dead right, I was just trying to stir a reaction and get him to come out of retirement to fight me—and it worked.

THE RING: His response was quite spicy: "Ricky Hatton ain't nothing but a fat man. I'm going to punch him in his beer belly," he told the BBC. "He ain't good enough to be my sparring partner." There was more, of course, but I think you get the drift.

RH: I chuckled when I read about how he was going to hit me in my big, fat beer belly. I really did have a right giggle. It will be a good fight. I don't think he'll stand in front of me, I think he'll run for the hills. But we'll see what happens and it should be interesting. I certainly intend to make it interesting. ■

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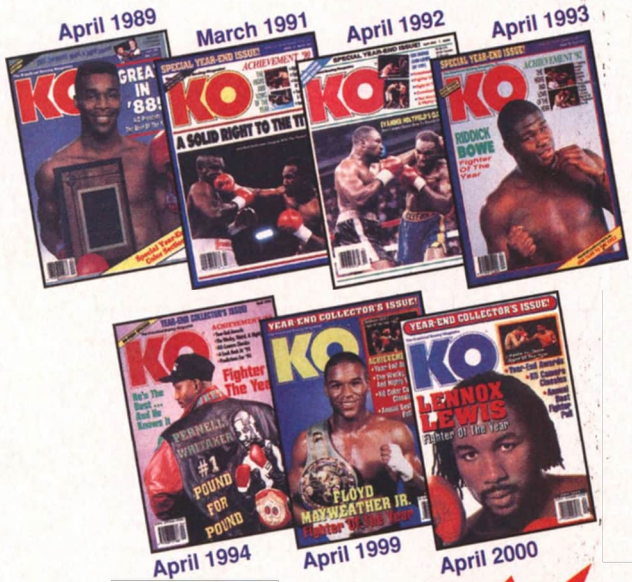

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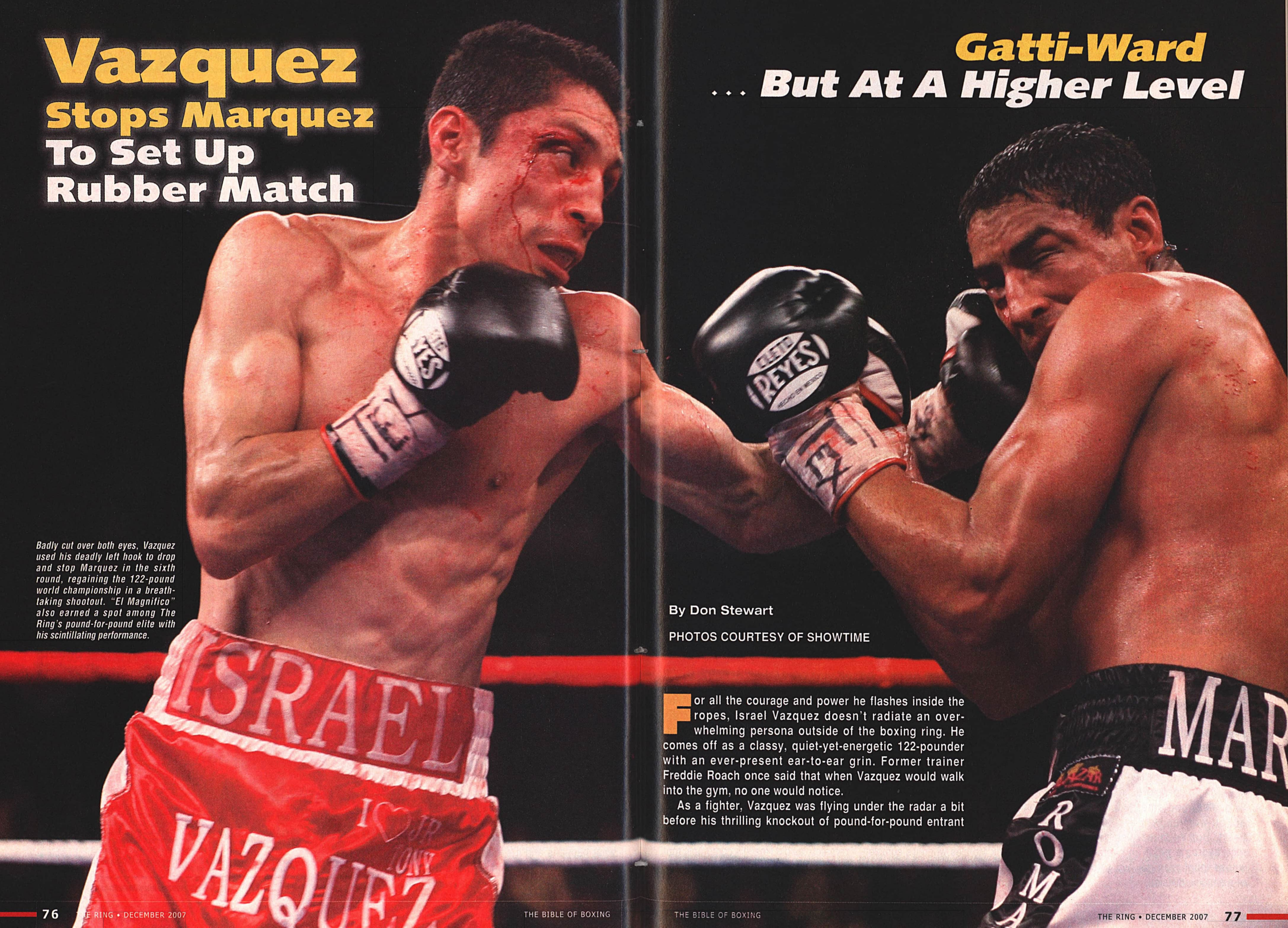
Vazquez Stops Marquez To Set Up Rubber Match

Gatti-Ward ... But At A Higher Level



Badly cut over both eyes, Vazquez used his deadly left hook to drop and stop Marquez in the sixth round, regaining the 122-pound world championship in a breath-taking shootout. "El Magnifico" also earned a spot among The Ring's pound-for-pound elite with his scintillating performance.

By Don Stewart

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHOWTIME

For all the courage and power he flashes inside the ropes, Israel Vazquez doesn't radiate an overwhelming persona outside of the boxing ring. He comes off as a classy, quiet-yet-energetic 122-pounder with an ever-present ear-to-ear grin. Former trainer Freddie Roach once said that when Vazquez would walk into the gym, no one would notice.

As a fighter, Vazquez was flying under the radar a bit before his thrilling knockout of pound-for-pound entrant

Marquez drills Vazquez with a right to the head (above), only to have his opponent answer back with a left hook (right). This sort of give-and-take action was typical of the slugfest many believe is the leading candidate for Fight of the Year.

Rafael Marquez in their August 4 rematch on Showtime to regain THE RING junior featherweight world championship. We all knew "El Magnifico" was good, but no one was calling him great. He'd won the world junior featherweight title, stopped the likes of Oscar Larios and Jhonny Gonzalez, and emerged as an all-action warrior with a champion's heart. But Vazquez was generally regarded as a bit of an overachiever whose toughness got him to the top of a shallow division.

By surviving two serious cuts over his eyes to stop Marquez, however, the low-key warrior has vaulted into the sport's top level. Vazquez' sixth-round knockout also set up a trilogy that should be comparable to Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales when it's completed early next year, as anticipated.

It's amazing what the right opponent at the right time can do for a guy's career. It's still too early to instantly dub Vazquez a great fighter; we'll probably have a better idea where he stands after the rubber match. But by stopping an elite opponent with Hall of Fame credentials who's still near the top of his game, Vazquez proved deserving of THE RING's number-five pound-for-pound rating.

Despite losing the rematch and dropping a few notches on most pound-for-pound lists, Marquez, 37-4 (33), might end up benefiting from the rivalry as well. Vazquez, 42-4 (31), was a bit underrated before, but that doesn't mean Marquez was overrated. He'd gone seven years without a loss, emerged as one of the top punchers in the game, and earned the right to be called the best fighter in two weight classes.

When he moved up from bantamweight to challenge Vazquez in March '07, Marquez ate some combos and was floored in the third round of a thrilling fight. But Marquez dished out a potent jab that proved to be the difference that night. Having suffered a broken nose in the first round, Vazquez couldn't breathe by the end of the seventh and had to quit.

Vazquez' submission and Marquez' success with the jab seemed to embolden Team Marquez for the August rematch, as did Roach's comments that Vazquez was beginning to slur his words and needed more time off

(Vazquez switched to rising L.A. trainer Rudy Perez between fights). Meanwhile, Marquez became agitated in the days leading up to the rematch by Vazquez continually blaming his loss on the busted schnoz.

Showing less patience than he did in their first meeting, Marquez jabbed less and hooked more, while Vazquez started faster and worked his way inside more effectively. It provided the ingredients for a classic. From the opening bell, the two traded bombs to the head and body from close range. The slightly taller Marquez had sporadic early success with the jab, but Vazquez continually closed the gap and swapped power-shots on the inside.

The third round might have been the best in a world championship fight since the 10th round of Jose Luis Castillo-Diego Corrales I. Early on, Vazquez landed a pretty left hook to the chin, similar to the one that dropped Marquez in their first bout. A hurt Marquez backed into the ropes, and then landed some hard counters as Vazquez jumped on him. The two kept trading openly with no regard for defense. Midway through the round, Vazquez connected with a pair of uppercuts that again drove Marquez back, but again Marquez countered with straight shots off the ropes, stunning his opponent. The two went back and forth in the final seconds and had to be separated at the bell.

"One of the greatest fights that I've ever been at ringside for," said Marquez' promoter, Gary Shaw. "I didn't think anything could surpass the first fight. This one surpassed it. Round three was just a hair under Corrales-Castillo. You've gotta give these two guys credit. Guys like this in these types of fights will save boxing."

Vazquez suffered deep cuts over both eyes in the round, which were ruled to be a result of Marquez' fists, while Marquez was left swollen and bleeding under his right eye. After just three rounds, it looked like the two had already gone 15.

"After that third round, that's when I noticed that Marquez was starting to shut down," said Vazquez' manager, Frank Espinoza. "He wasn't the same guy after that."

Espinoza was correct, to an extent. Marquez looked to be on somewhat shaky legs early in the fourth, when Vazquez hurt him with a straight right in the opening seconds, then a pair of right uppercuts near the midway point. But Marquez came back with several painful bodyshots before hurting Vazquez in the final 10 seconds with a big right to the chin. It wasn't quite as dynamic as the third, but it was close.

Slowing down in the fifth, Marquez began backing up more in an effort to establish his jab against the ever-pressing Vazquez, who feared the fight could be stopped at any time due to his cuts. A Marquez combo with a minute left in the round appeared to floor Vazquez, but referee Guadalupe Garcia correctly ruled it a trip. Sensing an opening, Marquez came forward only to be met by several short hooks. At the bell, Marquez nearly walked to a neutral corner by mistake.

He made a bigger mistake early in the sixth by dropping his right hand as Vazquez fired a bodyshot inside. That left an opening for another big left hook to the head by Vazquez that sent Marquez down. The proud Marquez bounced right back up, but he was still hurt as Vazquez rushed in for the finish. While still throw-

It was one of those fights where fortunes change several times per round, with both men dishing out tremendous punches. How Vazquez survived this hook from one of the sport's best punchers is difficult to understand. But that's what makes great fights and great fighters.

ing punches of his own, a dazed Marquez ate some more big shots along the ropes and was stumbling toward the corner when Garcia suddenly jumped in at the 1:16 mark.

It was a slightly premature stoppage that only further justified a rubber match between the two Mexico City natives. Marquez was clearly in trouble when Garcia intervened, though only Marquez knows how much danger he was really in at that moment.

Vazquez raises his arms in triumph as referee Guadalupe Garcia moves in and halts the fight in the sixth round. Even though Marquez had been decked earlier in the round, some thought the stoppage was a tad premature, which will surely be a major talking point leading up to the rubber match.

Given his knack for battling back in previous fights, along with what was at stake, Marquez deserved at least another 15 to 20 seconds to see if he could survive Vazquez' onslaught.

Garcia said afterward that he thought Marquez was in bad shape after the knockdown, and he didn't want him to take unnecessary punishment that would harm his career. But, like Vazquez with his nose in the first fight, the 32-year-old Marquez had an excuse for the loss. "I was still throwing punches," he said. "I don't know why he stopped the fight, because that was the wave of the fight. I don't know why the referee stopped it in that manner, because I was still throwing punches."

"It was just a matter of time," countered Vazquez, who will turn 30 on Christmas Day. "If it wasn't this round, it would have been the next round. I know he was in trouble."

The time was right for Vazquez, whose bad cuts might have eventually cost him the fight. That Vazquez was allowed to continue proved to be one of the few good things about staging the show in the border town of Hidalgo, Texas. The Vazquez-Marquez rivalry is comparable to, and maybe better than, Barrera-Morales and Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward in terms of action. Unfortunately for the sport, it's lagging far behind in exposure.

Dodge Arena was only half-filled for Vazquez-Marquez II, which was announced five weeks before fight night. The Showtime broadcast also conflicted with Morales' loss to David Diaz on pay-per-view.

"We learned," Shaw said. "We'll never go back to Hidalgo." Shaw and Vazquez co-promoters Sycuan and Golden Boy did an even worse job with the first fight, which drew just 5,155 fans to the outdoor Home Depot Center in Carson, California. Overall, both shows were terribly under-promoted.

Shaw said the promotional trio would likely do the rubber match in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, or maybe Mexico in February or March, and hopefully not on pay-per-view. He

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Vazquez celebrates with manager Frank Espinoza. Some had criticized Espinoza for putting his man back in with Marquez too soon after their brutal first encounter. By beating Marquez, Vazquez not only regained the title, he vindicated his manager's decision to take the fight.

also wants to make sure both fighters have had enough time to recover.

"I learned my lesson with Corrales-Castillo not to bring fighters back too soon after fights like this," Shaw said.

Roach felt five months wasn't enough time for Vazquez to recover from the first bout. But Espinoza, who was defensive about agreeing to the rematch before the fight, felt vindicated afterward. He pointed out that Vazquez had surgery to fix the damaged cartilage in his nose just 10 days after the March loss, and that he took his fighter to see a plastic surgeon for his eyes less than a week after the second bout.

"We proved people wrong who criticized us, people who thought we were just putting him in," Espinoza said. "Freddie Roach never knew what he was talking about; he didn't have the facts. I think he was out of line."

Roach, who suffers from Parkinson's syndrome as a result of his long boxing career, said he wanted no part of training Vazquez for the rematch. Espinoza said Team Vazquez had already decided to bring in Perez to replace Roach, who they felt would be too busy preparing Bernard Hopkins for his July meeting with Winky Wright.

"We wanted a strategist," Espinoza said. "Rudy brought a lot to the table. Vazquez came in with a game plan and Marquez didn't. That was the big difference. He was right there in his face the entire time. That was our game plan, to take the distance away."

The plan worked in the rematch, though Marquez and trainer Nacho Beristain will likely have an answer for it in the rubber match.

The typical formula for these types of trilogies is that the rematch winner goes on to take the third fight (see Barrera-Morales, Gatti-Ward, Humberto Gonzalez-Michael Carbajal). But Vazquez probably won't be favored in his third meeting with Marquez, which should be a pick 'em bout.

That's not likely to faze Vazquez. The intro to his official website reads like the script to a Nike commercial: *"They said I would never be a world champion. They said I would never get my revenge. They said I couldn't come back and win ..."*

And they said the low-key little slugger probably didn't belong among the sport's elite. No one's saying that now.■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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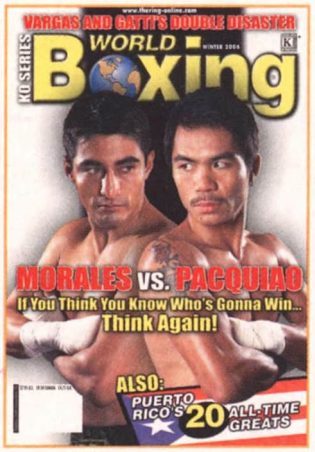

Winter 2006

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Referee Jay Nady sends Katsidis to a neutral corner after the Australian slugger floored Amonsot with a withering flurry in the 10th round (below). Even though Katsidis was never down himself, his opponent's punches inflicted considerable damage (inset).

KATSIDIS EXPLODES
JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME
Has Boxing Found The New Gatti?

By Don Stradley

You knew it wasn't going to end when ringside doctor David Watson was examining Michael Katsidis, even though Czar Amonsot had turned Katsidis' face into chopped beef. No, Katsidis wasn't going out that way.

It wasn't so much that Katsidis has been called "the new Gatti," or that he's from Australia, the same island continent that has produced some of the game's gnarliest brawlers. It's just that Katsidis has a look

PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

about him. You wouldn't give up on him if he was on his hands and knees in a parking lot while someone was hitting him in the head with a garbage can. His previous fight, a five-round war at London's Wembley Arena with Graham Earl, saw both fighters on the canvas before Katsidis emerged triumphant. Knowing this, we couldn't count him out, even though his left eye was so damaged that he could no longer pick up Amonsot's right hook. True to form, Katsidis survived the doctor's inspection, came out blazing in the 10th, dropped Amonsot, and won the fight on points.

"It was a tough fight, but that is the way I like to win them," Katsidis said. It's a good thing Katsidis likes it tough, because that's how it's been for him in recent years. He's already faced a prison term, visa problems, and a disappointing stint in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, minimal coverage in Australia, and the frustration of seeing fights with Acelino Freitas and Joan Guzman canceled.

The bout with Amonsot took place in Las Vegas on the undercard of the Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright pay-per-view at the Mandalay Bay Events Center. Like Katsidis' bout with Earl, it was a Fight of the Year nominee. The 305,000 PPV customers who bought the event will probably be Katsidis' fans for life. Now Katsidis' camp is working toward a December date with lightweight titlist Juan Diaz. That could be Katsidis' third Fight of the Year candidate within a calendar year. Not even Arturo Gatti did that.

Katsidis, 23-0 (20), is nicknamed "Rocky," but lately he's gone by "Michael The Great," which ties in with the Greek warrior's helmet he wears into the ring. He has a sense of humor too. "I told you I was bringing some new blood into the sport," he said, as the claret gushed out of his face. But there was little to laugh about after the fight, as the Filipino was believed to have suffered a brain injury. As Katsidis was stitched up at the Valley Medical Center, he overheard doctors discussing Amonsot's condition.

"I thought for a while he was on his deathbed," Katsidis told the

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The unheralded Amonsot proved much tougher than Katsidis expected. The Filipino southpaw battled back from two knockdowns to score with plenty of his own bombs before losing a 12-round decision on the Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright pay-per-view card.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Like Arturo Gatti, the fighter he is frequently compared to, Katsidis' porous defense makes him susceptible to facial damage. Nevada commission doctor David Watson examined Katsidis during the Amonsot fight, but permitted him to continue.

Courier Mail. "It was a bad feeling and really emotional as the surgeons decided if they needed to operate on him." It was reported that Amonsot's career was over, but since then Amonsot has been given a clean bill of health and may fight again if doctors clear him after a six-month rest.

Katsidis needed 27 stitches to put his face back together. He'd bled so much during the fight that he'd actually stained Amonsot's bleached blond hair a new shade of pink. Katsidis tried to do what his trainer, Brendan Smith, asked, but when you're the new Gatti, it's easier to go right-hand crazy and hope for the best. Judge Ruben Garcia scored the bout 116-110, Patricia Morse Jarman had it 114-112, and C.J. Ross saw it 115-111, all for the blood-soaked banger from Toowoomba, Queensland.

"The fight was definitely tougher than I thought it would be," said Katsidis, who pocketed about $100,000 for his American debut. "Then again, they are always tougher than I think they will be."

Katsidis has sports in his genes. His brother, Stathi, is a leading Queensland jockey. His uncle, Eddie Ellston, was a bantamweight who fought regularly at Sydney Stadium in New South Wales. Inspired by his uncle, Katsidis had an exceptional amateur career, winning 75 of 81 bouts and representing Australia in the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The Olympic experience was anticlimactic. Katsidis was eliminated during the quarterfinals, and he feuded bitterly with Australia's boxing coach, Bodo Andreas. Katsidis' distaste for Andreas' methods created such a stir that Kostya Tszyu was summoned to straighten things out. The controversy must have been disheartening for Katsidis, because representing Australia meant everything to him. Before facing Earl, Katsidis said he wanted to "remove the bitter taste in my mouth by avenging one of Australia's greatest sporting losses when Kostya Tszyu lost his world title

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Amonsot was knocked down twice during his 12-round war with Katsidis and was rushed to the hospital afterward, where it was determined that he had suffered a minor brain bleed. Amonsot is expected to have a complete recovery, but his boxing career remains in doubt.

to Earl's gym partner, Ricky Hatton."

Katsidis stopped Earl on a fifth-round TKO, but not before being nailed a few times himself. He dropped Earl twice in the first round, and was hammering him so badly that Earl's corner threw in the towel, only to have it tossed out by referee Micky Vann. Then Earl rallied and dropped Katsidis with a right hand. Earl put Katsidis down again in the third, before finally succumbing two rounds later.

Whipping Earl made Katsidis the first Australian to wear an alphabet belt at lightweight. But even with his head-banging style, Katsidis has yet to really be noticed Down Under. The bout with Earl wasn't even shown on Australian television; hardcore fans had to wait and see highlights on youtube.

"Boxing in Australia, to be honest, is struggling a bit," said Brisbane sportswriter Phil Lutton. "We've had fighters like Tszyu, who were obviously brilliant, but on a whole, it struggles." Boxing is a long drop below the main Aussie sports, like cricket and rugby. According to Lutton, "Katsidis struggles for headlines. Same with blokes like [Vic] Darchinyan." Aussie writer Paul Upham told THE RING, "Katsidis' recent win was the biggest exposure he has had on Australian television. He is still relatively unknown in this country. He is only

known to hardcore boxing fans and does not have any real national profile among mainstream sporting fans. Every fight we receive from the USA is only on pay-per-view here, every single fight. It makes it hard to attract new fans. But the way he won over Amonsot will now help him greatly."

Katsidis has received more coverage for his out-of-the-ring activities. One day after beating Amonsot, Katsidis was ordered by a Brisbane court to pay $10,500 to a man whose jaw he broke in a streetfight nearly six years ago. Katsidis was sentenced to two years in prison in November 2002 after being convicted of causing grievous bodily harm. He pleaded not guilty, claiming he had punched Jamie Thomas Halpin in self-defense. Katsidis was found guilty, lost an appeal, and subsequently served eight months before being released on parole. Katsidis' legal team even turned up evidence that Halpin had been on a drinking binge, fighting with people other than Katsidis, and urinating on cars. The judge agreed that Katsidis' action was in self-defense, but with excessive force. Halpin needed metal plates and screws put into his jaw. The conviction has dogged Katsidis for years.

"I acted in self-defense and was forced to go to prison, and I will always maintain that I didn't deserve that," he said. "There are people who have killed others and not served time, yet I went to prison and continue to pay."

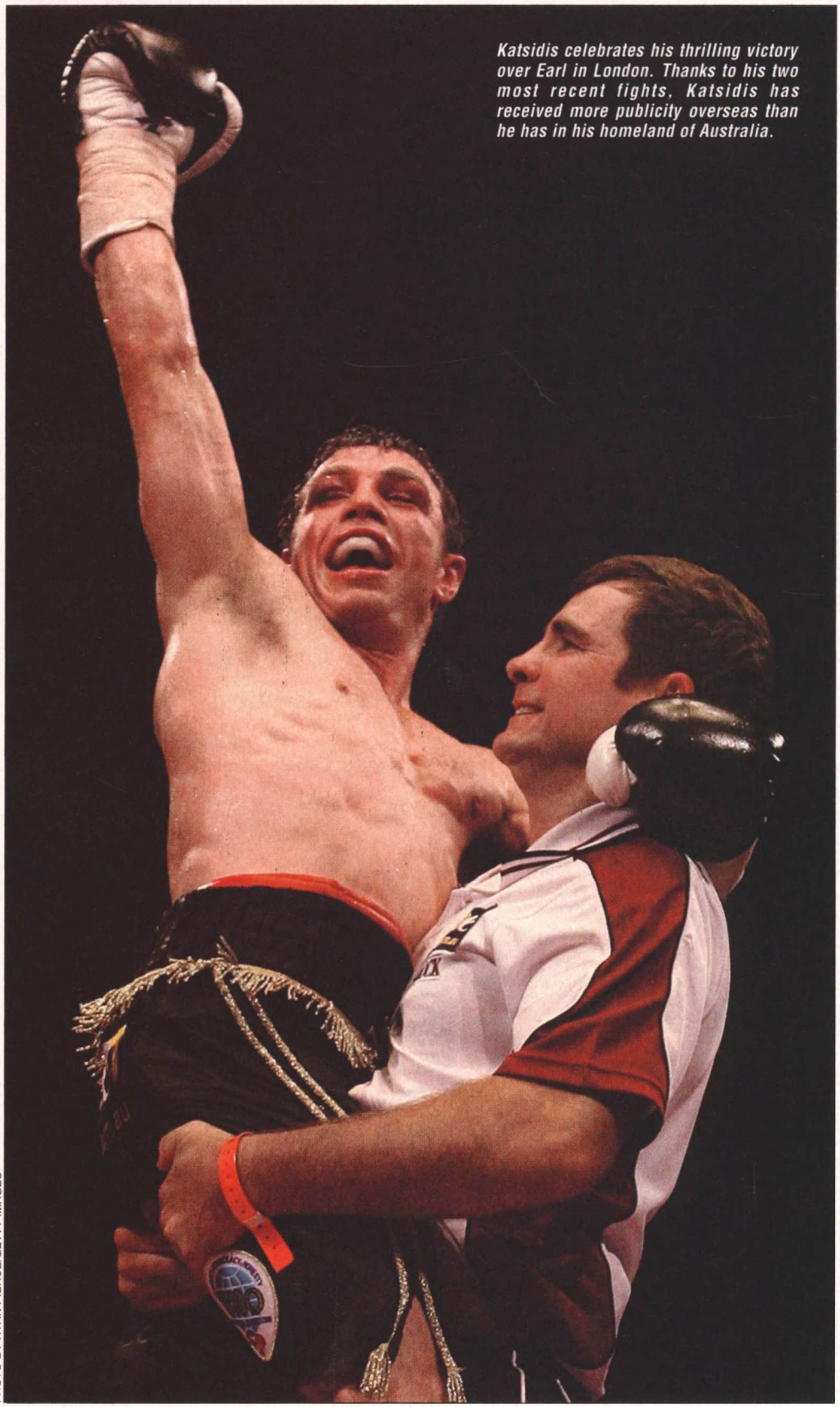
Six months of his sentence were spent in Woodford, a high-security facility outside Brisbane. "It was tough in jail, particularly the six months in the high-security section,

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Give-and-take slugfests are becoming a habit for Katsidis. In his February 2007 bout with Graham Earl, he came off the floor to batter the Englishman into a TKO defeat at the end of the fifth round in a candidate for Fight of the Year honors.

but I knuckled down and was eventually made activities supervisor," Katsidis said. "My prison report even said I was a calming influence."

The sentence may have been stiff, but Katsidis is no angel. The brawl happened while Katsidis was halfway through a yearlong, good behavior bond for punching the bar manager in Toowoomba. Katsidis was also a suspect, but not charged, in a home invasion case where the victim suffered a broken cheekbone and was lashed with a whip. These incidents slowed Katsidis' career as officials from the U.S. Consulate in Sydney refused him a visa to fight in America. They finally relented in the summer of 2006 when Katsidis' attorney persuaded Queensland Premiere Peter Beattie to write a letter asking the Consulate to reconsider.



Katsidis celebrates his thrilling victory over Earl in London. Thanks to his two most recent fights, Katsidis has received more publicity overseas than he has in his homeland of Australia.

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERCE/GETTY IMAGES

Still, sympathy for Katsidis hasn't been universal. Derryn Hinch, a popular Aussie radio host and author, didn't shed a tear during Katsidis' visa battle. Writing about the visa situation on his website, Hinch described it as "another case involving a young Australian who is bleating about the injustices of the world." Katsidis is hardly the first fighter to have a prison record, but one wonders how his seedy past goes over in Toowoomba, a conservative city often criticized for being a bit behind the times.

"I don't think his time in the big house dented his popularity up in his hometown," said Lutton. "Regional towns here, just like the U.S., are pretty parochial and they would probably embrace the local boy made good with open arms should his rise continue. Towns like that don't spawn world champs too often."

Toowoomba is ripe for a sports hero. A university city with a population of about 97,000, Toowoomba is known as Australia's "Garden City" because of its annual Carnival of Flowers festival. There are no major teams

there, although for a short time Toowoomba was home to The Clydesdales, the farm team for the Brisbane Broncos rugby team. Katsidis has a good following in Toowoomba, but something tells us the quaint old town might not emulate Lewiston, Maine, the American burg that erected a giant billboard exclaiming, YOU ARE ENTERING THE HOMETOWN OF JOEY GAMACHE.

"We have a thing down here called 'tall poppy syndrome,'" said Upham. "People who achieve success are closely watched and made to jump large hurdles. The average Joe in the street will ridicule their success."

Katsidis' days in his beloved Australia may be numbered, at least where boxing is concerned. At the height of his visa problems, Katsidis told the *Courier Mail*, "Realistically, I have to accept that my future lies in the U.S. That's where the money is, that's where the fights are."

"As far as he is concerned, once you are inside the ropes it doesn't matter where you are," said Smith. "He's a very level-headed young man. He got great experience going to England with a crowd of 12,000 against him, so coming into a coliseum like Mandalay Bay, it doesn't faze this young bloke."

Katsidis was already familiar with America because he trained at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood and at Gleason's Gym in New York prior to meeting Earl in England. He has said he prefers the rusty iron shed behind the Bronco Motor Inn just outside Toowoomba, where he's trained most of his life. Training in America, however, gave him a chance to spar with Shane Mosley, who was impressed with Katsidis' raw power. Katsidis also met Hall of Famer Jake LaMotta.

"Jake LaMotta told me he was the ranked number-one contender for five years before getting his shot at the title," said Katsidis. "It proved to me that all the hard work and setbacks are worthwhile."

As long as Katsidis breaks jaws in the ring, and not in the street, everything should be fine. ■

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

A bit of a character, Katsidis has a large tattoo on his back and enters the ring wearing what appears to be a gladiator's helmet. He's also had a few problems with the law Down Under that delayed his visa to fight in the United States.

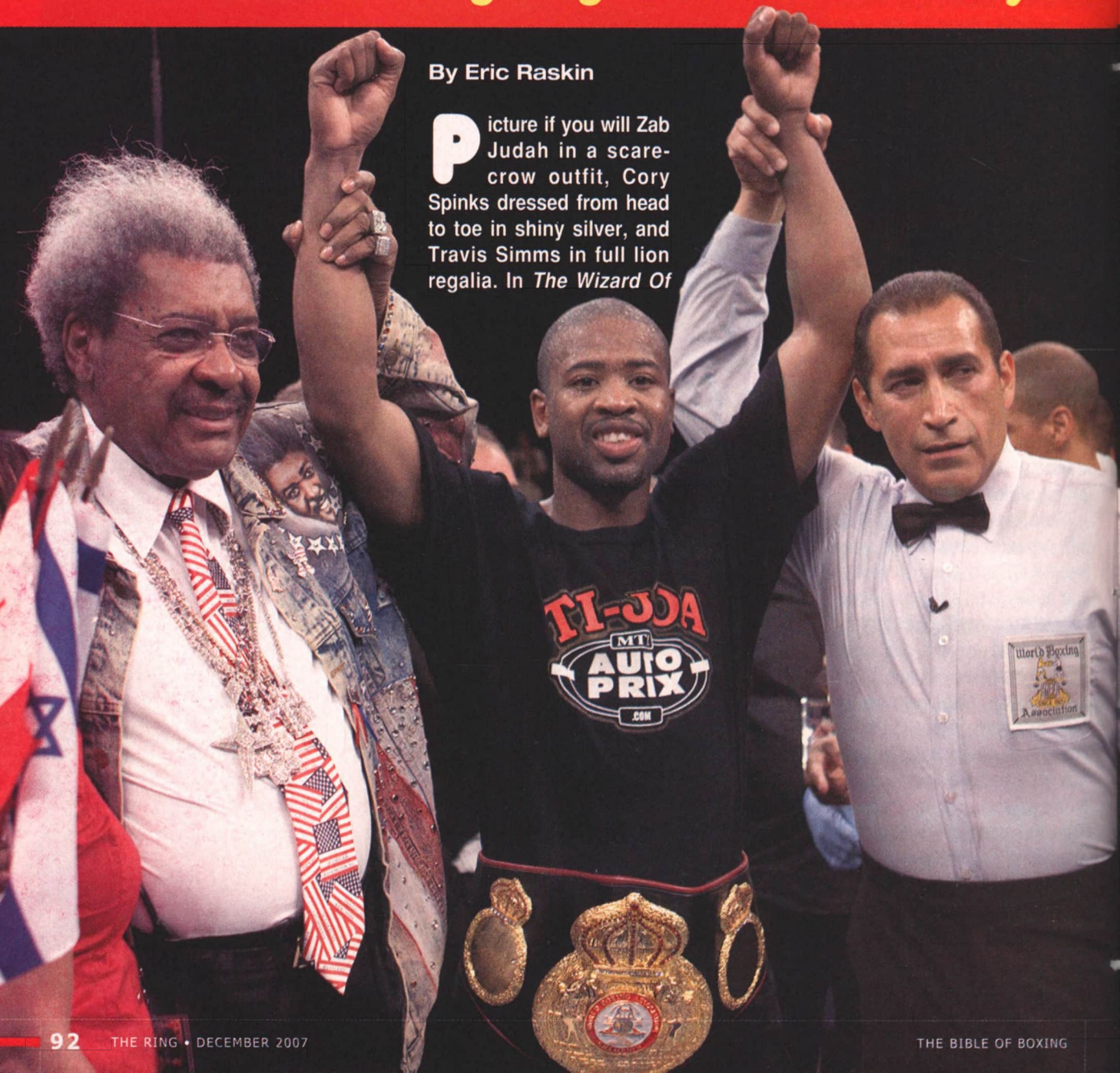
Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

BURNT BY HOME COOKING

The Obstacles Of Fighting In Your Own Backyard

By Eric Raskin

Picture if you will Zab Judah in a scarecrow outfit, Cory Spinks dressed from head to toe in shiny silver, and Travis Simms in full lion regalia. In *The Wizard Of*



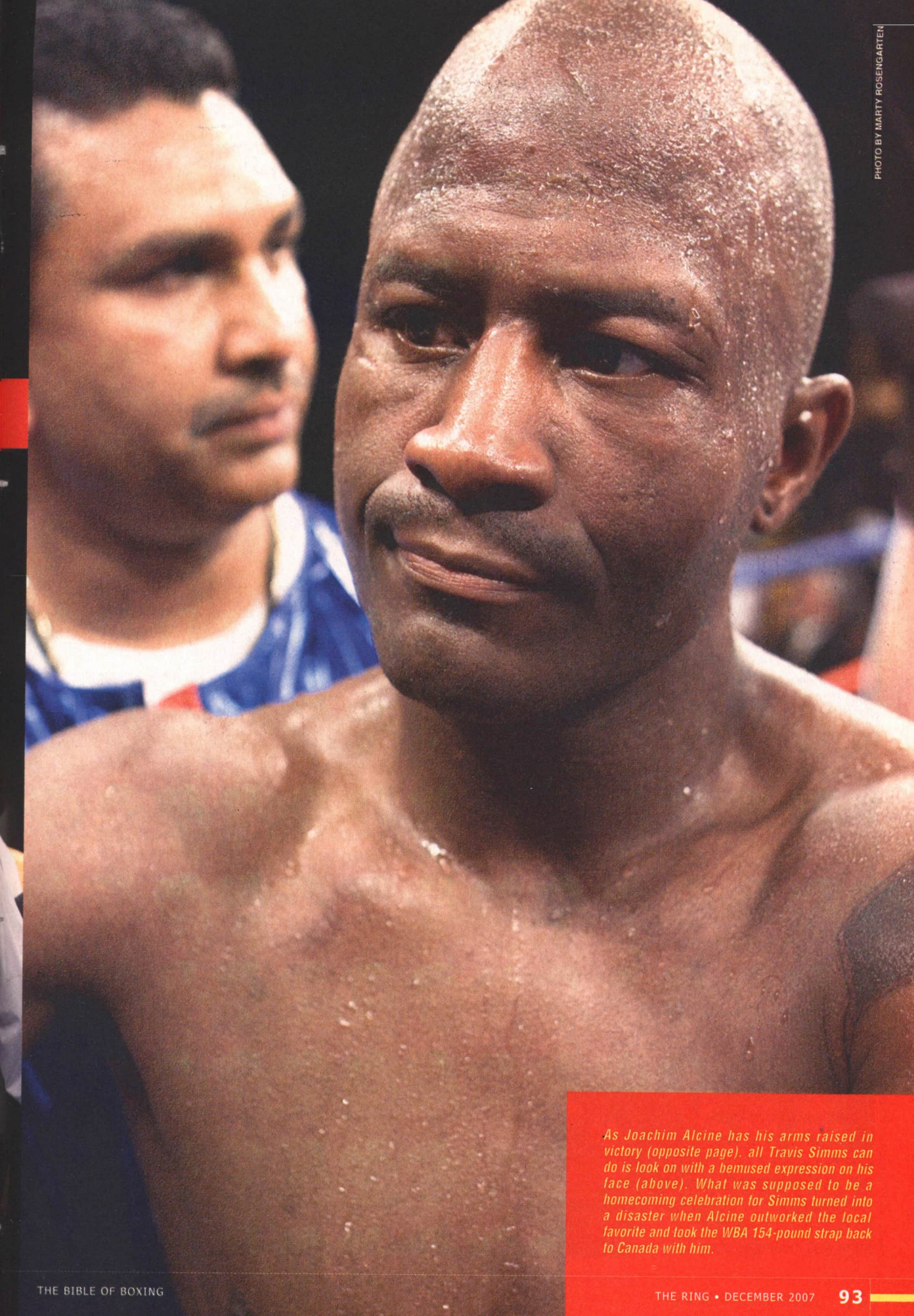


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

As Joachim Alcine has his arms raised in victory (opposite page), all Travis Simms can do is look on with a bemused expression on his face (above). What was supposed to be a homecoming celebration for Simms turned into a disaster when Alcine outworked the local favorite and took the WBA 154-pound strap back to Canada with him.

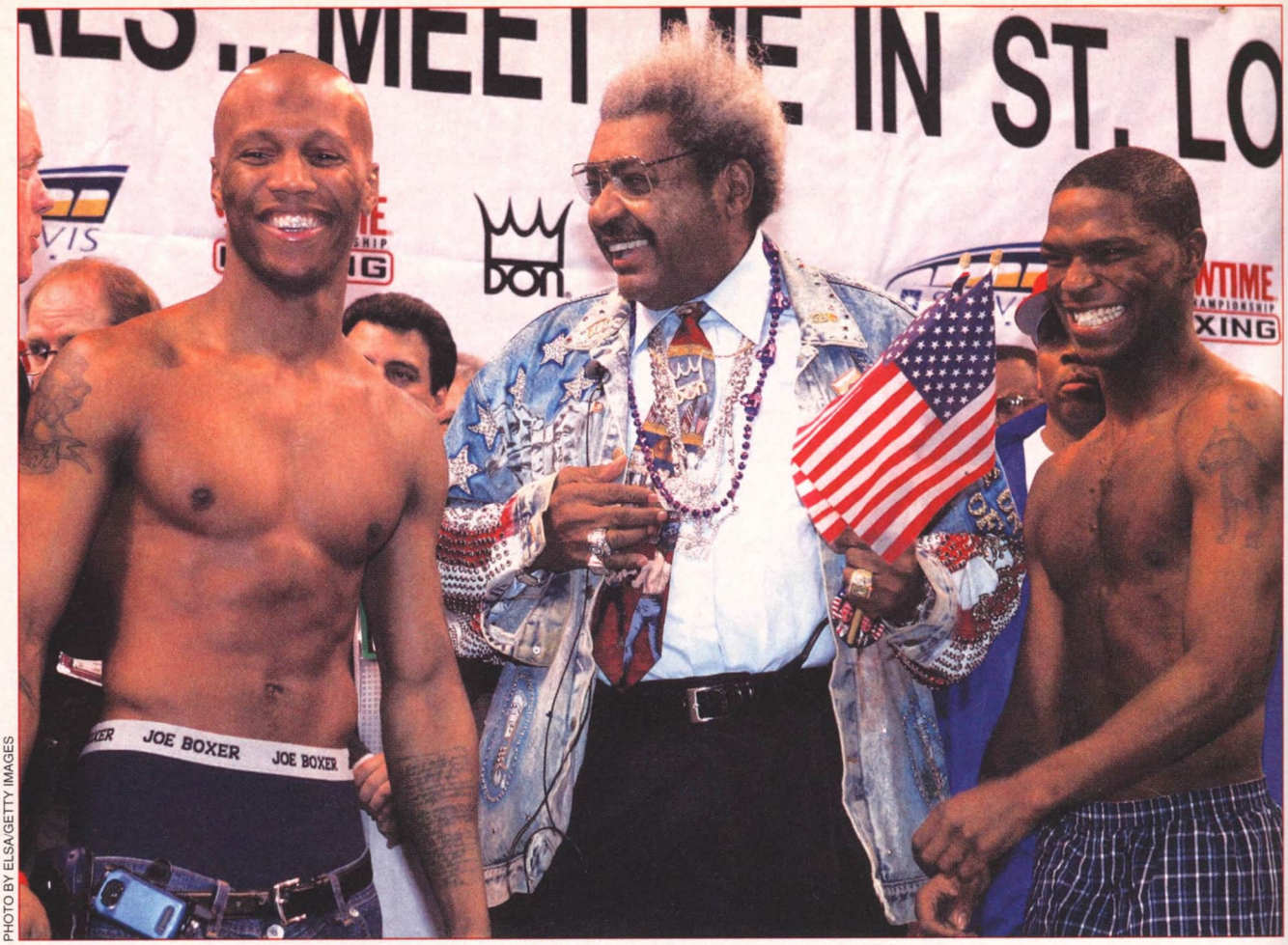


PHOTO BY ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

Zab Judah, Don King, and Cory Spinks were all in a good mood at the weigh-in for Spinks' February 2005 title defense in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. More than 22,000 fans turned out to see the fight, but most went home disappointed after Judah knocked out their homeboy in the ninth round.

Oz, when Dorothy clicked her heels together and repeated those five famous words, "There's no place like home," her three friends supported her in her efforts to return to the comforts of Kansas. But it may have been a different story with the aforementioned three pugilists by her side. You can easily imagine Simms, Spinks, and Judah offering a collective "Not so fast, Dotty." All three of them know that while home field does have its advantages, disaster can befall you just as easily at home as it can anywhere else. In fact, if you're not careful, it can befall you even *more* easily at home.

On February 5, 2005, Spinks defended his undisputed welterweight title against Judah in front of a beyond-hyped swarm of more than 22,000 hometown fans at the sold-out Savvis Center in St. Louis, thrilled the locals with his ring-entrance dance moves, and then failed to deliver in the fight, getting knocked out in the ninth round. In a way, there was indeed no place like home for Spinks. After all, in no other city has he ever been kayoed.

On January 7, 2006, it was ironically Judah, attempting to defend the world welterweight crown he'd won from Spinks, who got bit by the hometown bug. Taking on the lightly regarded Carlos Baldomir in a tuneup for a pay-per-view blockbuster against Floyd Mayweather, the Brooklyn-based Judah shocked his fans at The Theater at Madison Square Garden by performing so badly he ended the Upset of the Year race with 51 weeks to go. Fighting with his hands simultaneously encased in gloves and wrapped around his throat, Judah lost a unanimous decision and was in such defensive survival mode down the stretch that he conclusively refuted any notion about home being where the heart is.

On July 7, 2007, junior middleweight beltholder Travis Simms made good on his dream of defending in his hometown (give or take a few miles; Simms is from Norwalk, Connecticut, and the fight was at the Harbour Yard Arena in neighboring Bridgeport). But after a career-best destruction of Jose Antonio Rivera his previous time out, the undefeated Simms turned in a career-worst showing against little-known Joachim Alcine, hugging and holding his way through 12 ugly rounds and not getting any help in the form of home cooking from the judges.

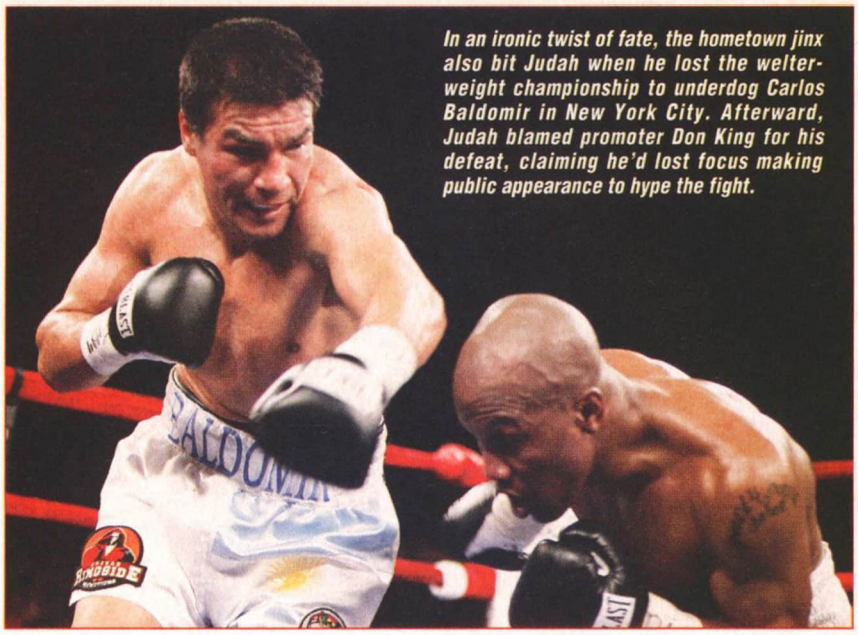
Competing in the friendly confines of a home arena sounds on the surface like a good thing, and frankly, most of the time it is. Spinks, Judah, and Simms provided us with just one good example per year over the last three years of a top fighter flopping in his hometown, and certainly they're far outnumbered by the top fighters who've done their best work at home: Joe Mesi in Buffalo, Ricky Hatton in Manchester, Juan Diaz in Houston, Joe Calzaghe in various cities in the U.K., to name a few.

But there are certain pitfalls to fighting in front of your hometown fans, and

a boxer who is unprepared for them is better off fighting anywhere but home. Here are the four most common reasons that a homecoming turns into a comeuppance:

1. Added press commitments: From open workouts and interviews to photo ops, the demand from the press is greater when you're fighting at home, and the pressure on the fighter to do the promoting and insure a full house is greater as well. During his in-ring interview after losing to Baldomir, Judah, in no uncertain terms, placed the blame on being at home and being expected to carry the promotion. He pointed the finger directly at Don King while the broom-haired promoter was standing just a few feet away.

"I have no excuses," Judah said before launching into his excuses, "but my promoter messed me up. All week I was doing his job of promoting the fight by making appearances all over the place."

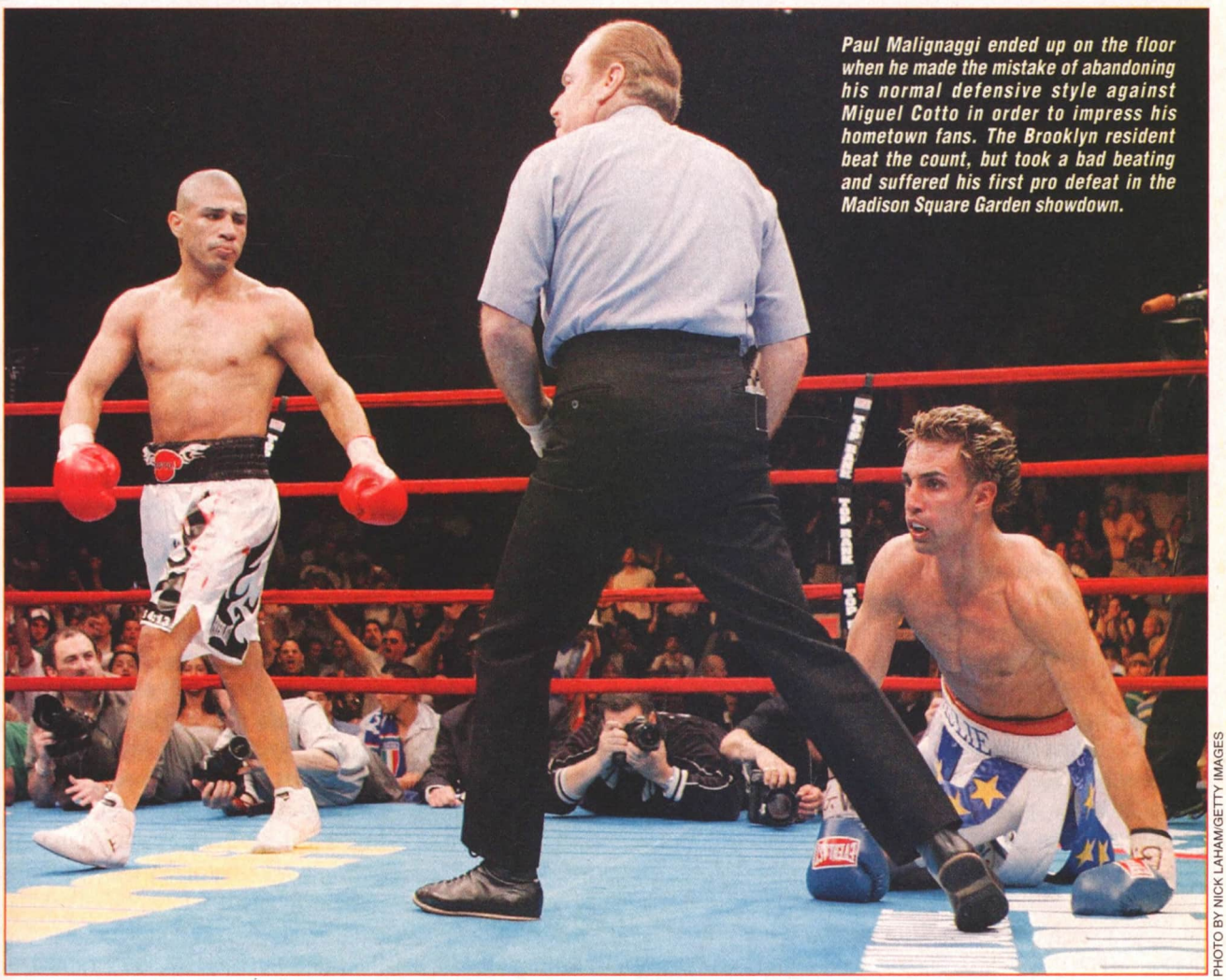


In an ironic twist of fate, the hometown jinx also bit Judah when he lost the welterweight championship to underdog Carlos Baldomir in New York City. Afterward, Judah blamed promoter Don King for his defeat, claiming he'd lost focus making public appearance to hype the fight.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Simms related a similar sentiment, saying that with tickets going on sale only about four weeks before the fight, much of the burden of promoting the Alcine fight fell on his shoulders.

"Because the fight wasn't promoted right, I had to do a lot of extra work leading up to the fight, doing things with the



Paul Malignaggi ended up on the floor when he made the mistake of abandoning his normal defensive style against Miguel Cotto in order to impress his hometown fans. The Brooklyn resident beat the count, but took a bad beating and suffered his first pro defeat in the Madison Square Garden showdown.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

In one of the most famous hometown collapses in history, WBA heavyweight titleholder John Tate, fighting in Knoxville, Tennessee, was ahead on the three scorecards after 14 rounds against challenger Mike Weaver, only to be knocked cold in the final round.

media to help promote it," he said. "I would say that played an integral part in how things turned out."

2. Distractions from family and friends: When a fighter is 1,000 miles from home, the only family and friends he has to deal with are those who are such a part of his inner circle that they travel to his fights wherever they are. When everybody the fighter grew up with lives within a few miles of the arena, the equation changes significantly.

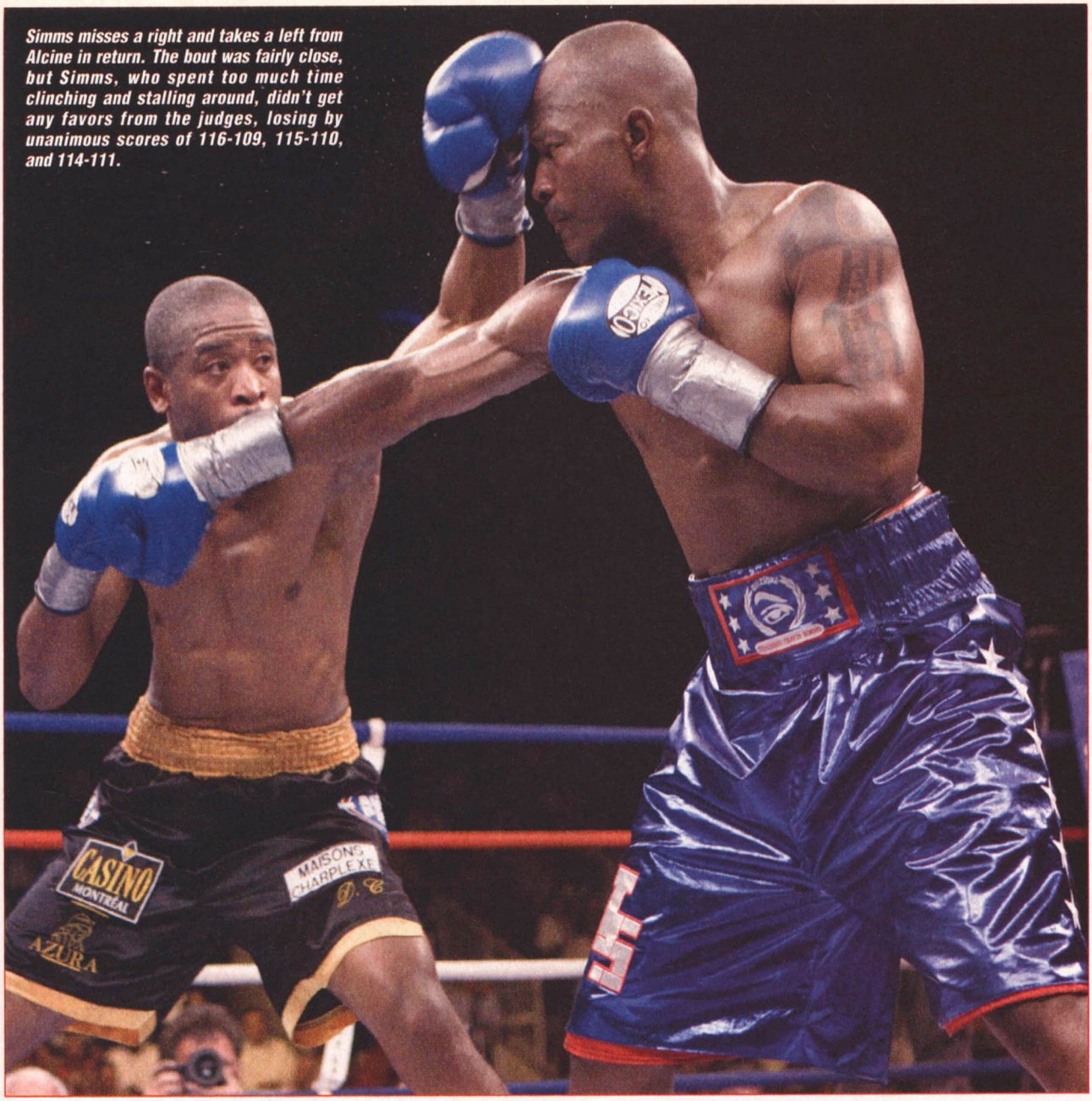
"When you're in the hometown," said veteran matchmaker Carl Moretti, "you've got the fighter easily accessible to all his friends, and he hears, 'Hey, can I have two tickets?' everywhere he goes."

Kevin Cunningham, who trains and manages Spinks and doesn't place the blame for his loss to Judah on any hometown elements (he instead says Spinks' marital problems had the greatest negative effect on his performance), has a rigid system in place for avoiding turning his phone into the Ticketmaster hotline.

"When we know we're fighting at home," Cunningham said, "there's a lot of ticket requests and whatnot, and those things *can* be a problem if you don't prepare for them properly. But we really don't deal with that stuff. We assign somebody to deal with all the ticket requests for all the family members and friends. Instead of coming into town on Monday or Tuesday of fight week, we come in on Wednesday, as late as possible, so we only have a couple days of public workouts and stuff where you have to deal with friends, family, and hanger-ons."

3. The crowd's influence: Without a doubt, a feverish hometown crowd can have a positive impact on a fighter. As Hatton said before his career-defining win over Kostya Tszyu, which took place in front of a raucous assemblage at the MEN Arena in Manchester, "The atmosphere at a Ricky Hatton fight tends to be more what you would relate to as a soccer match. It can be very vocal, very loud, and very passionate. So it may give me an advantage because I think no matter how experienced you are, I think you have to be a very tough man for it not to affect you."

For Hatton, it helps because he's at his best when applying pressure, charging forward, and winging hard shots to the body just the way the crowd wants him to. But what if a fighter's best strategy is to box cautiously? Can he do that as the hometown crowd, which began the fight chanting his name, has started to grow restless and the chants have given way to catcalls? Paulie Malignaggi was in his hometown at Madison Square Garden in June '06 when he took on Miguel Cotto, and though the situation was a bit unusual because the New York crowd was mostly there to root for Malignaggi's Puerto Rican opponent, the slick-boxing "Magic Man" nevertheless caved to the pressure to impress and entertain his Big Apple brethren, and he tried in spots to exchange punches with the heavy-handed Cotto. Malignaggi made a lot of new fans that night, and he even managed to keep the fight much closer than expected,



Simms misses a right and takes a left from Alcine in return. The bout was fairly close, but Simms, who spent too much time clinching and stalling around, didn't get any favors from the judges, losing by unanimous scores of 116-109, 115-110, and 114-111.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

but he certainly didn't fight the fight that gave him his best chance of actually pulling off the upset.

Probably the most famous example along those lines came on March 31, 1980, when Big John Tate defended his heavyweight alphabet title against Mike Weaver in Knoxville, Tennessee, as close to a hometown fight as the Marion City, Arkansas, native would ever have. Through 14 rounds, Tate was ahead on all three scorecards and could lose only if Weaver stopped him from hearing the final bell. But Tate had no interest in running or holding his way to victory, not in front of those hometown fans who'd paid good money to see him. With 45 seconds to go, Tate stood right in front of Weaver, thinking little about defense, and got clocked with a left hook that ended his title reign in dramatic fashion.

4. A false sense of security about the decision: After boxing 12 close, difficult-to-score rounds against Canadian Alcine, you couldn't blame Simms for thinking the judges in Bridgeport might side with him. But not only did they score for Alcine, they did so by wide margins of three, five, and seven points. That made the pain of defeat that much worse. "If I was going to get screwed," he said, "I'd rather have gotten screwed in Canada or someplace else."

Not everyone agrees that Simms actually got "screwed"—but there's no debate about whether the judges in Steubenville, Ohio, tried to screw visiting journeyman Carmen Iacobucci when he came there to challenge popular hometown flyweight "Cowboy" Billy Smith on October 20, 1965. Veteran promoter and boxing historian Don Elbaum has a million great small-town boxing stories, and this is one of his best.

"I'm building Cowboy Billy, and the guy's a big, big attraction," Elbaum recalled. "The fight was an unbelievable war, the place was packed to see Cowboy Billy, and Iacobucci won 10 out of the 12 rounds. The ring announcer gets in

the ring, he looks at the scores, he's got the mike in his hand, and he says, 'Oh God, no.' And, of course, everyone heard it. So the sheriff of Steubenville, the guy who basically ran the town, says, 'Let me see those scorecards.' He looks at them, and when he sees that all of them voted for Smith, he tears them up, and he says, 'Unanimous decision for Carmen.' And that's how it went into the books, as a win for Iacobucci."

Quite often, of course, the hometown fighter gets a bogus decision and nobody overrules it—see the 2004 fiasco in Muskegon, Michigan, between Courtney Burton and Emanuel Augustus, perhaps the ultimate example from the last few years—but the point of the above cases is to show that the local fighter can't always rely on getting bailed out by the judges. If the local lad does under-perform, thinking all he has to do is keep it close, he can easily end up like Simms did.

No matter who you are, fighting at home comes with its extra challenges. But there are certain variables that determine the degree of difficulty. One is whether you've fought at home regularly and are used to it. Spinks hadn't fought in St. Louis in four years, and had never had a *major* fight there, when he took on Judah; in his very next fight, he returned to the Savvis Center against another tough opponent, Roman Karmazin, and fared much better, scoring a mild upset decision win. The experience of the Judah fight probably made competing at home a little easier for him the next time around.

The amount of pressure you face also depends on the size of the city you call home. In New York or Los Angeles, where there are countless top fighters, a homecoming fight isn't exactly front-page, or even back-page, news. But in a smaller town, it's a bigger deal. Mesi was known as "The Third Franchise" in Buffalo (the Bills and Sabres being the first two), and when Virgil Hill fought in North Dakota in the late-'80s and early-'90s (25 of his 56 pro fights have been in his home state), there was nothing else to compare locally in terms of professional sporting events. It's worth noting, though, that Mesi's struggles against Monte Barrett and Vassiliy Jirov both came outside Buffalo, and none of Hill's six losses came in North Dakota. So one could argue that the added pressure of having an entire town counting on you is not necessarily a bad thing.

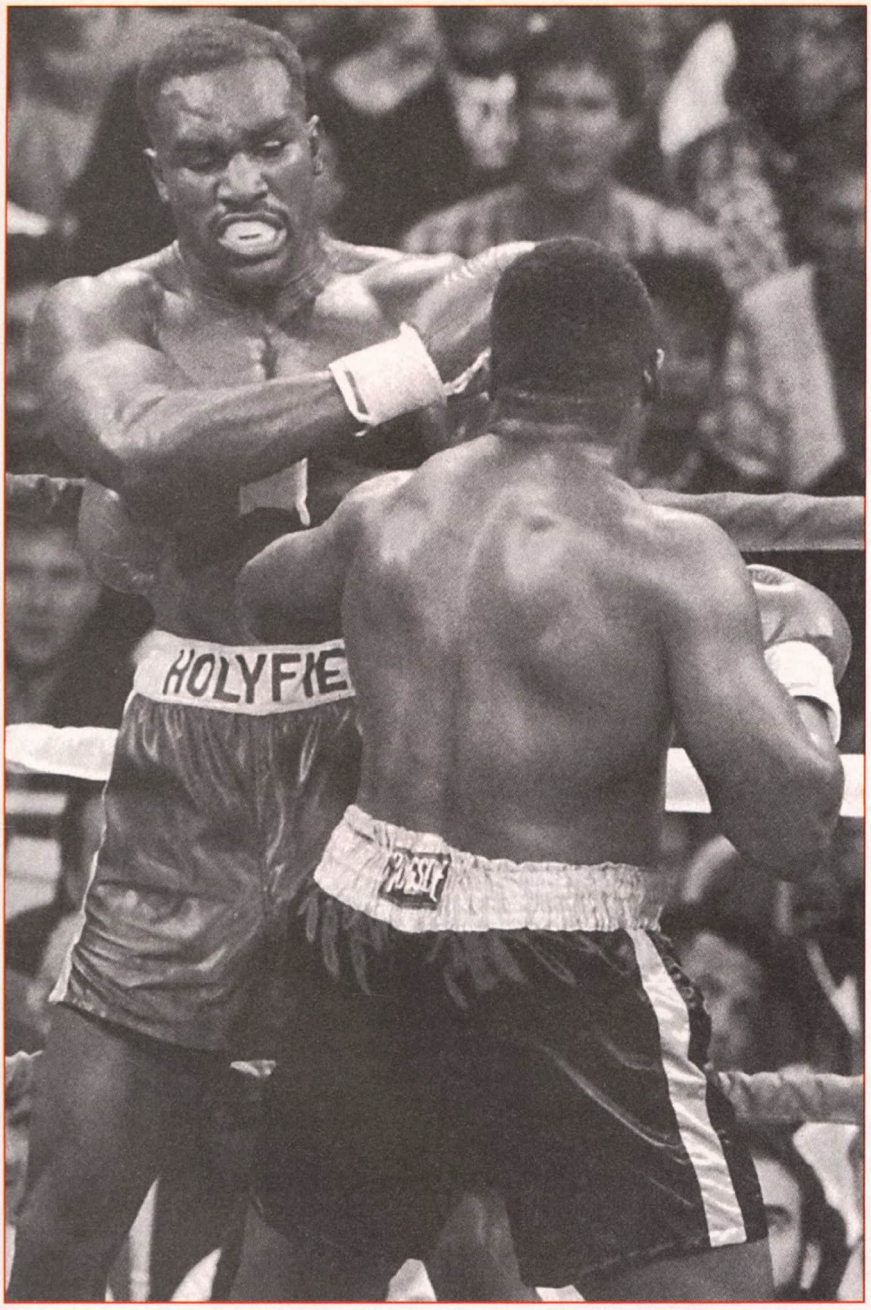
The entire state of North Dakota was Virgil Hill's hometown. He won all 25 of the professional bouts he fought there, and regardless if whether the fight was in Minot, Fargo, Grand Forks, or Bismarck, a large crowd always turned out to root for him.

Matchmaking is also a huge factor, especially when a fighter is testing the waters in his hometown for the first time.

"If it's possible to get away with it, you want a lesser opponent if you're going to come into your fighter's hometown for the first time," Moretti explained. "You want to get somebody that you really don't think is going to cause too many problems, because there's just a lot to overcome. And the style is that much more important. I mean, what could be worse than having to fight a stinkin' southpaw in your hometown? You'll never get the fans to follow you again, and they'll blame you, because the fans don't know enough to realize it wasn't your fault the fight was bad. The matchmaking becomes more important. You definitely want to be a little more careful with it."

But nothing is more important than how a fighter handles his preparation for a hometown fight—and, specifically, *where* he handles his preparation. It's one thing to be home for a few days before the fight; it's another thing to be home for eight weeks before the fight, dealing with the distractions on a daily basis.

"I go elsewhere to train, to clear my mind, to get prepared for battle and get focused," Simms explained. Moretti said, "There are some fighters that you need to always send away to training camp, regardless of if the fight is in his hometown or not."



Evander Holyfield has met with mixed results the handful of times he fought in his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. In 1991, "The Real Deal" came close to losing the heavyweight title there, when Bert Cooper almost knocked him out before Holyfield rallied back to win.

Even if you do everything right, take every precaution, boxing remains, to quote Larry Merchant, "the theater of the unexpected," and you never quite know how a homecoming fight is going to turn out. Take Evander Holyfield, for example. He's fought in his native Atlanta three times as a pro. In just his 12th fight, he scored one of the best wins of his career, decisioning Dwight Qawi in a grueling 15-rounder at The Omni to claim his first title belt. Five years later, as world heavyweight champion, he came within one punch of losing via massive upset to late sub Bert Cooper in the same arena. And seven years after that, he returned home to fight in the Georgia Dome against Vaughn Bean, and gave an all-around mediocre account of himself. Three fights, one great performance, one near-disastrous performance, one somewhere in between.

And speaking of big-time fighters from the Atlanta area, a story Moretti recounted for THE RING illustrates that sometimes going home is a loss regardless of what happens in the ring.

"We did a fight with Vernon Forrest in Augusta, Georgia, in August 1999. He was fighting Santiago Samaniego, and we had [Augusta native] Brandon Mitchum in the opener," Moretti remembered. "All week we were down there, and we were getting coverage like the Pope was coming to town, which was great. Radio, TV, this, that, and the other thing. It was a perfect arena. You love doing those shows too; it makes it fun. It's not your typical thing where you're just going through the motions, you really enjoy doing it.

"And the next thing you know, we're at the arena for the fight, and nobody shows up. I mean, we had less than 1,000 people in an arena set up for 5,000 or 6,000. We've done shows with small crowds, but you never expected to do it with that kind of coverage. We were running around on fight night, and I say, 'Hey, we gotta open the doors, we're about to start.' And the building guy goes, 'The doors have been open for an hour-and-a-half.' We didn't bring Vernon back to Georgia again after that."

Clearly, it takes a lot to make for a successful hometown fighter. The fighter has to be disciplined. He has to be mentally strong. He has to be able to block out all of the distractions. And, oh yeah, it doesn't hurt if he has some hometown fans who care enough to see him fight. ■

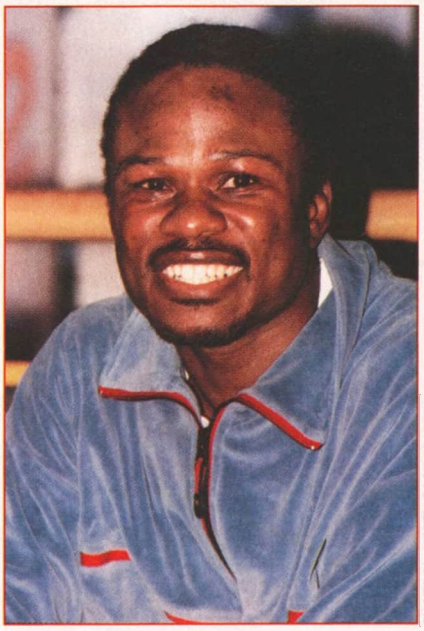


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

When Vernon Forrest fought in his hometown of Augusta, Georgia, he garnered an abundance of media attention, but despite all the hype, the arena was almost empty on fight night.

The RING UPDATE

Two-Division Former Titleholder

Joey Gamache

"There's More To Me Than Just The Gatti Fight"

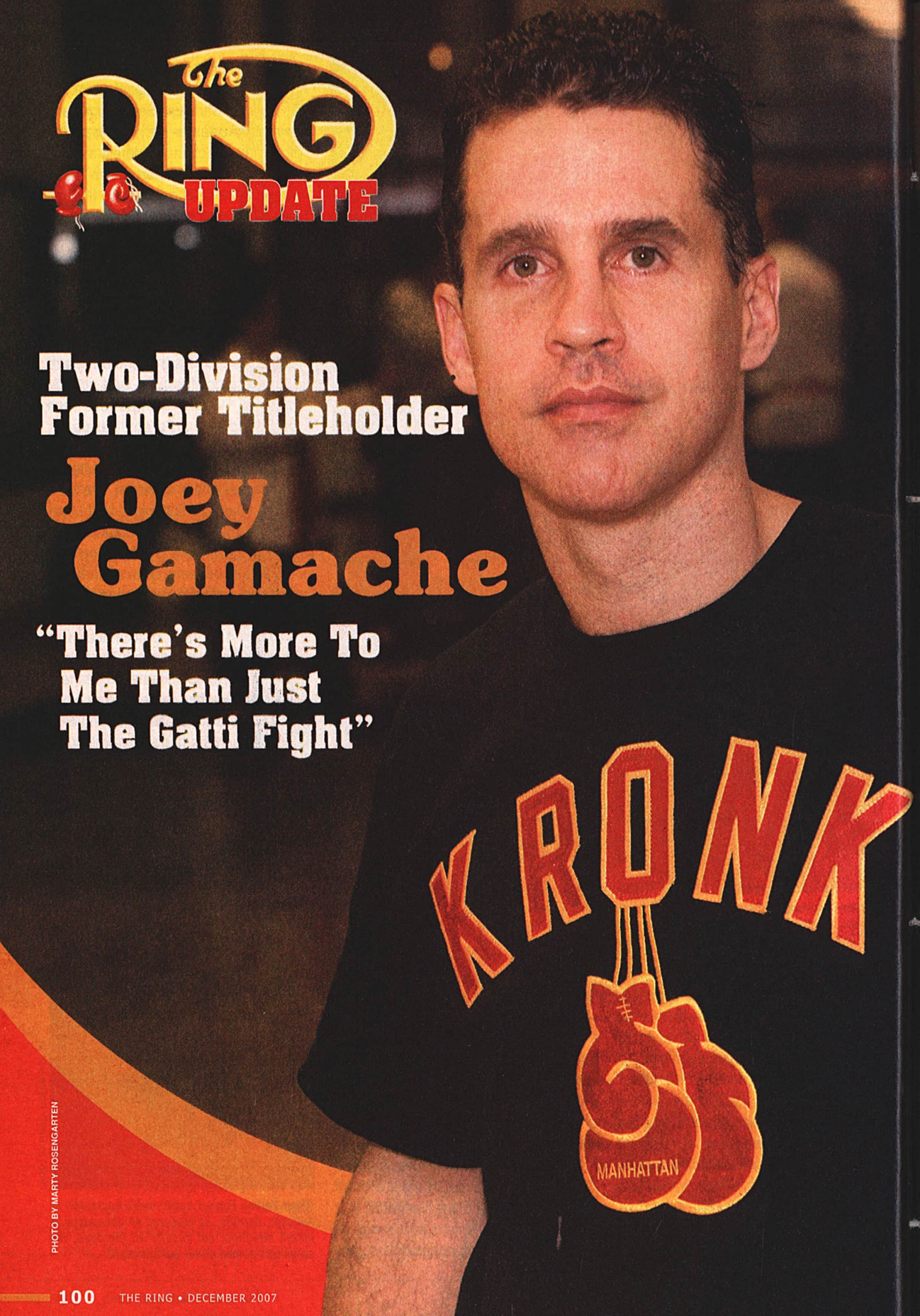


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

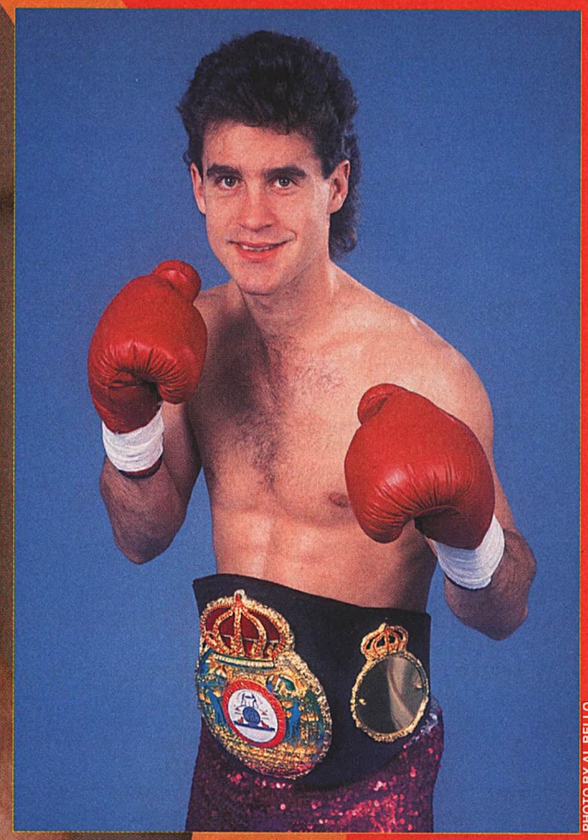


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Then and now: Gamache as he looks today as a budding trainer, and as he appeared in July 1992, shortly after winning the vacant WBA lightweight title with an eighth-round knockout of Chil Sung Chun.

By Mitch Abramson

They pat him on the back and look at him warily. "Joey Gamache," they say. "How have you been?" "Good," he assures them. "Everything's good."

They smile weakly, but their expression seems to indicate their doubt. You can't really blame them. They saw the fight where Arturo Gatti landed a three-punch combination that knocked Gamache on his head and out of boxing in 2000. They've heard the rumors that Gamache had sustained brain damage, and was depressed, floundering in his new career as a trainer.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Gamache's career came to a sudden and violent end when he was knocked out in the second round of a 2000 bout with Arturo Gatti at Madison Square Garden. Gamache is suing the New York State Athletic Commission for alleged irregularities at the weigh-in.

When Gatti ran into Gamache a few years later at a local gym, Gatti leaned in, as if in a clinch: "How are you?" he said. "I mean, really, how are you?'"

Now, Gamache wants to restore his image, let people know he is fine.

It's taken him seven years, but he is finally shrugging off the effects of one of the worse knockouts in recent memory.

Gamache, a former WBA junior lightweight and lightweight titleholder, is currently an assistant trainer to Emanuel Steward, the Yoda of boxing trainers. Gamache was in the corner when welterweight titlist Kermit Cintron knocked out Walter Matthysse in the second round on July 14 in Atlantic City. Suddenly, after years of irrelevance, Gamache is back in the limelight.

"He's got that spark back in his eyes," said Gamache's longtime promoter/manager, Johnny Bos. "I see it all the time with former fighters. After they retire, it's like they have nothing to do and they lose their desire. I think Joey was like that for a while. He's a different person today."

Gamache has been to three training camps with Steward, mostly tending to undefeated prospects middleweight Andy Lee and cruiserweight Johnathon Banks. He also worked with Steward's middleweight champion, Jermain Taylor, in the Poconos for his September 29 defense against Kelly Pavlik.

In conversation, the 41-year-old Gamache is both funny and intelligent, making those persistent rumors of him being punchy seem farcical.

"This is what I came to New York for," said Gamache, who is from Lewiston, Maine, and now lives on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. "I came here to become a trainer and to be in a camp with Emanuel, who will go down as the greatest teacher of all-time. I have to pinch myself because this is such a great opportunity."

Still, no matter what he does, Gamache will always be linked to the events of February 26, 2000, when his career came to a violent end at Madison Square Garden.

Even today, walking along the streets of Manhattan, drivers honk their horns in recognition of the little man who was involved in something disturbing, perhaps both in and out of the ring when he fought Gatti.

Gamache has filed a $5.5-million lawsuit against the New York State Athletic Commission, alleging improprieties at the weigh-in before the Gatti fight, and he anticipates a trial

date before the end of the year. If that happens, it will be the conclusion of a lawsuit that has taken nearly a decade to resolve.

"The commission failed to uphold the rules and regulations which they were charged with upholding," said Keith Sullivan, Gamache's third attorney to work the case. Both Sullivan and the previous attorney, Michael Coyle, declared that Gamache suffered neurological damage as a result of the fight. "Gatti never properly made weight, and there are people at the weigh-in who can properly attest to this," alleged Sullivan.

Gatti was noticeably larger than Gamache when they fought, and according to an unofficial weigh-in carried out by HBO on the night of the fight, Gatti weighed 19 pounds more than the agreed-upon weight of 141 pounds. Gamache claims that Gatti was rushed off the scale at the official weigh-in to hide his true weight, which he claims could have been as high as 146 pounds.

What took place in the ring was almost inevitable. Gatti dropped Gamache twice in the first round and landed a flush barrage of punches in the second that sent Gamache hurtling through space. Gamache says he doesn't remember anything after the first round. It took him nearly seven minutes to get to his feet after the knockout, and he decided to retire as he ambled back to the dressing room. He spent the next two nights in a hospital recuperating from a severe concussion.

Covering the event for *The New York Times*, Tim Smith wrote that Bos, Gamache's manager "protested the day of the weigh-in by saying that Gatti was over the weight limit, because when Gatti got on the scale, which was already set at the prescribed weight of 141 pounds, the needle went right to the top of the scale. Gatti waved his arms in the air and the needle bounced. Tony Russo, the executive director of the New York commission, announced his weight at 141 pounds. 'I started yelling and screaming,' Bos said. 'After the fight, I thought he was all right in the dressing room. They sent him to the hospital and I'm glad they did. When he got there he was throwing up. It was serious.'"

A spokesman for the commission had no comment, citing the ongoing nature of the case. Assistant Attorney General Joseph Paterno, who is handling the case for the commission, also declined comment.

After the fight, Gamache went home to Maine and resurfaced at Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn in an attempt to start a new career as a trainer. During the better part of the last three years, he spent the majority of his days seated at a rusty old locker, offering a smile and good conversation to anyone who approached. He only had few clients and seemed to be in a sort of boxing limbo.

One of the more interesting

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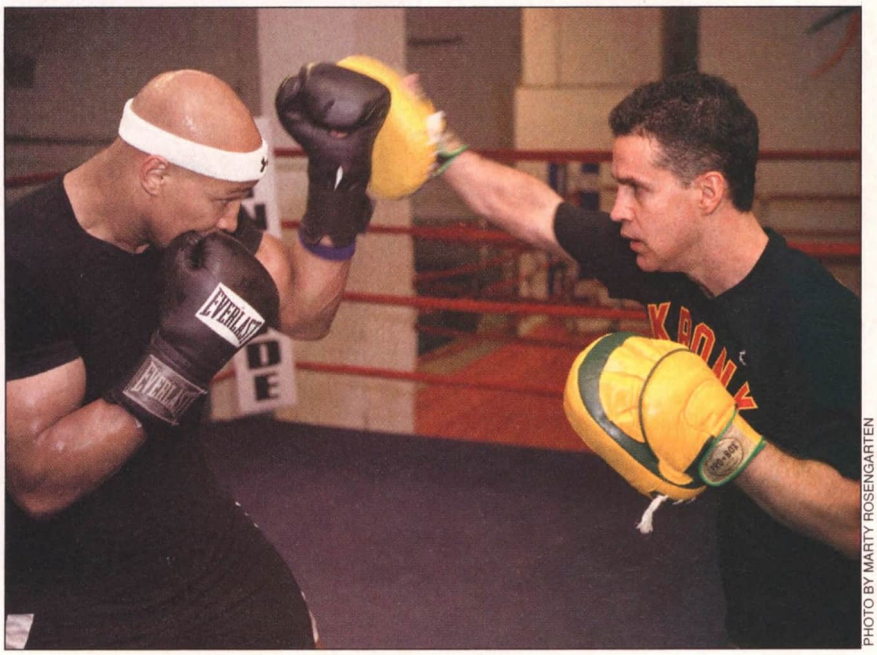

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hands-on trainer Gamache shows heavyweight Damien Rapley a combination on the heavybag (above), and then climbs into the ring with him for some pad work (below). Those who have seen him working with fighters say Gamache is attentive, patient, and a real student of the game.

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aspects of boxing is the camaraderie that exists. For all the backstabbing and chicanery, there is also great compassion and kindness. The tale of how Gamache was hired by Steward underscores the network of writers and trainers who came to the former fighter's aid.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly why Gamache fell out of favor at Gleason's. Bruce Silverglade, the owner, said the gym caters to white-collar fighters and that Gamache was seeking to work with more established fighters. Gleason's is home to numerous world champions too, but they were all tied up with trainers, Silverglade said. Still, there is perhaps another explanation. The atmosphere for a trainer is hardly amiable at Gleason's. Trainers routinely undercut each other to land fighters, according to a trainer at the gym who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

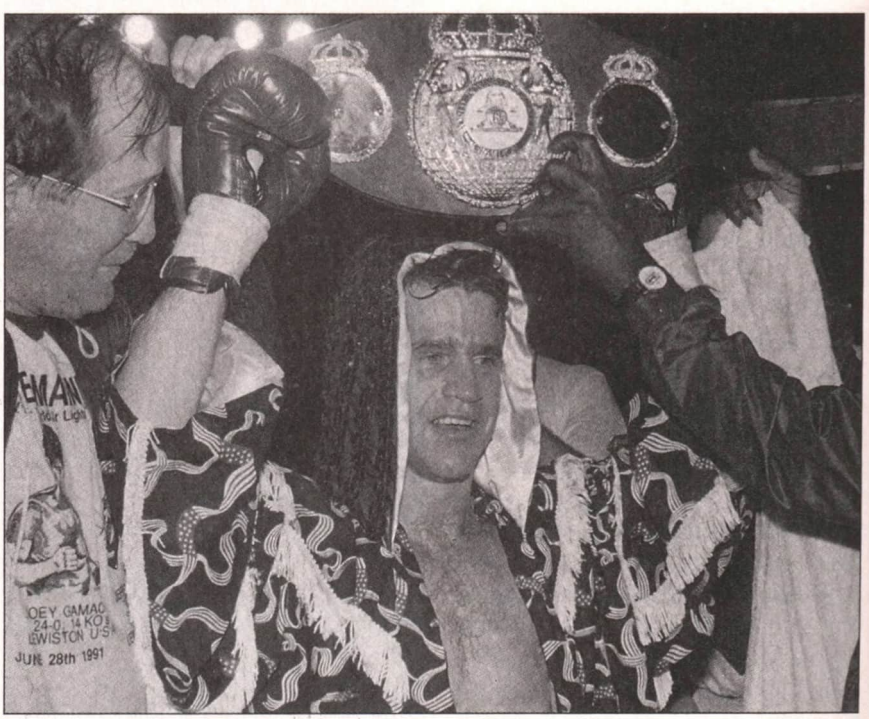
Gamache avoided these types of dealings, often going to Maine to install drywall with his father. The fighters he did train, Chris Smith and Agapito Sanchez, who was shot and killed in 2005, eventually left because Gamache was not always at the gym. So Gamache was content to train amateurs for free. One of them was Zachary Levin, a boxing writer.

"A lot of these kids don't have a sense of history and they probably never heard of Gamache," Levin said. "They didn't appreciate Joey for what he was. I found it bizarre why more fighters didn't come to him.

As a fighter, Gamache was a superb technician. As a trainer, he is attentive and patient. He often breaks into fantastic soliloquies on boxing. Watching Gamache, who is 5'6", thin, and still boyish-looking, demonstrate a technique for a client is riveting theater. He loves to talk boxing.

Levin realized that Gamache was in a rut and he tried to revamp his spirits. He would take Gamache to boxing events, allowing him to mingle with other movers and shakers in the business. Levin conducted video interviews with Gamache for the website fightbeat.com, where Levin is a former editor, posting footage online to show that Gamache was indeed healthy.

"There was a rumor that Joey had suffered brain damage, and I wanted to show that he wasn't punchy," Levin said, "that he could speak and hold intelligent conversations. Joey wasn't



Gamache holds up the WBA junior lightweight belt he just won by knocking out South African Jerry N'Gobeni on June 28, 1991, in Gamache's hometown of Lewiston, Maine, where he drew large and enthusiastic crowds during his prime.

A bleeding Chun parries a left from Gamache during their June 1992 bout for the vacant WBA lightweight strap held in Portland, Maine. Unfortunately for the South Korean, he didn't avoid enough of Gamache's bombs and was stopped in the eighth round.

mixing with people and it was important to get him out there to the fights."

Levin, through his contacts, would figure out when a famous trainer was in town, and the two would crash the event, hoping to make a connection.

Levin and Steward had a mutual friend in boxing writer Jack Hirsch, an American correspondent for the English weekly, *Boxing News*, and Hirsch called Steward to voice his support for Gamache.

Another proponent was trainer Jimmy Glenn, who worked with Gamache toward the end of his career. When Ray Austin fought Wladimir Klitschko in Germany on March 10, Glenn was in Austin's corner and Steward was with Klitschko. Before the fight, as Steward wrapped Klitschko's hands, Glenn entered the dressing room and immediately went to bat for Gamache.

"He kept talking about this young trainer, a former two-time champion who was one of the great teachers of the game," Steward said. "I knew who he was talking about, but I acted like I had no idea who he was, just to mess around. He said there was a young kid I had to take a look at, someone who has a lot of patience and is a good teacher."

A week later, Steward invited Gamache to camp to help Taylor prepare for his match with Cory Spinks, and he has been a fixture with Team Kronk ever since. Steward admitted he was swayed by the numerous pleas for Gamache.

"They really came through for him," Steward said. "I knew of Joey, but at the time didn't think of him this way until these people, who I value for their knowledge, told me about him."

The first two weeks with Steward, Gamache did nothing but watch. Finally, he was asked to wrap Lee's hands.

"You're nervous, aren't you," Lee said, according to Gamache. "You betcha," Gamache said with a wide smile, retelling the story.

The first corner he worked, an eight-round fight with Lee in Germany on July 7, was a success for Lee and a learning experience for Gamache. In the ring before the fight, Steward turned to Gamache and asked for coco butter to apply to the fighter's neck and shoulders.

"Where's the coco butter?" Steward asked.

"I don't got it," Gamache said.

He darted from the ring and retrieved the coco butter, but the fight was over by the time he returned—a second-round knockout for Lee.

"I had the coco butter in my hand in the ring," he recalled recently, laughing at the incident.

For the Cintron fight, not only did Gamache bring coco butter, but he also brought a bucket with adrenaline chloride, water, ice, and Q-Tips, even though it was all the same material the cutman would bring.

Steward, who is assisted by three trainers, is grateful to have Gamache in camp.

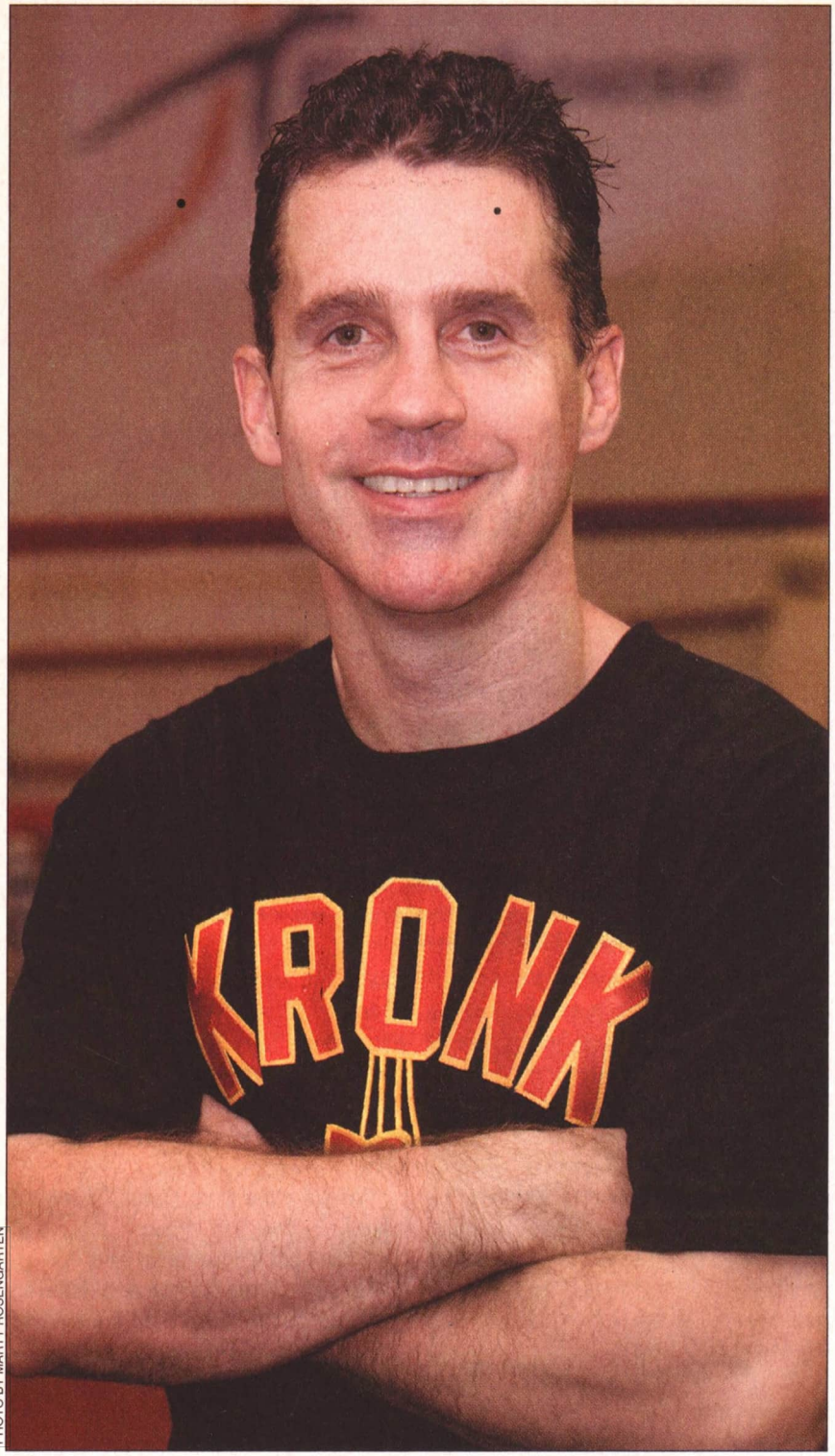


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

After a slow start, Gamache's career as a trainer took off when he was hired by Emanuel Steward to work with various Kronk fighters. Steward said that Gamache has been a "godsend."

"Joey is a godsend," said Steward. "He's very low key and humble, and he's very effective. If you look at some of the top trainers in the history of boxing, they were quiet guys who just went about their business without a lot of whooping and hollering, guys like Ray Arcel and Eddie Futch. Joey's like that, and he's really bonded with guys like Andy and Johnathon. They go to the movies together and run in the morning. He got close to them gradually, not by coming in and saying, 'Look at me; I'm a former world champion.' Joey's just a nice kid, who's also a real student of the game."

It wasn't lost on Gamache that on the night of his greatest triumph as a trainer in Atlantic City with Cintron, Gatti was beaten and retired by Alfonso Gomez at Boardwalk Hall on the same show.

"It was kind of ironic," Gamache said. "I'm going to Arturo Gatti's fight, this is the guy who finished my career and this could very well be the end of his career and the beginning of mine. These were the thoughts going through my mind. I knew the situation going in. I knew Gomez was a tough, capable fighter and Gatti's career was near the end."

Was part of him pleased to see Gatti get trampled?

"No," he said. "I'm a fighter and I think like a fighter, so I have compassion for a fighter. I don't want to see anyone get hurt."

Life is good again for Joey Gamache. He has two sons, Steven, 24, and Robin, 18, who is currently serving in Iraq. He lives in a stylish first-floor apartment on Central Park West with his wife, actress, Sissy Gamache. He no longer takes medication for migraine headaches that were triggered by the Gatti fight. He received a $2-million settlement in 2001 from the United Kingfield Bank of Bangor (Maine). The bank, Gamache said, reneged on its commitment to loan him $285,000 to open a restaurant in Lewiston, costing him his life's savings. And he is starting to live up to the praise given to him by the boxing analyst Al Bernstein, who called Gamache, "one of the future stars of training," during a telecast for Showtime in 2005.

"My entire career wasn't just the Gatti fight," said Gamache, who compiled an overall pro record of 55-4 (38) between May 1987 and February 2000. "I fought 10 years as an amateur and 13 as a pro. I was never a great fighter, but I was a solid fighter. The Gatti fight was the last time people had a look at me. They thought I was finished. It wasn't the best note to go out on. I'm trying to show people that there's more to me than just the Gatti fight." ■

Mitch Abramson is a freelance writer based in New York City.

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[Summary]

Heavyweights

Kevin Johnson W 10 Damian Wills
Rob Calloway W 10 Terry Smith
David Tua KO 1 Saul Montana
Roman Greenberg KO 9 Damon Reed
Chazz Witherspoon KO 9
Talmadge Griffis
Tye Fields KO 7 Domonic Jenkins
Victor Bisbal KO 2 Vernon Woodward
John Poore KO 5 Dione Craig
Osborne Machimana KO 5 Jake Els
George Arias KO 2 Mauro Hulk
Robinson Escobar KO 2 Salvador Silva
Joey Abell KO 1 Mike Sheppard

Cruiserweights

Grigory Drozd W 12
Jean Claude Bikoi
Matt Godfrey W 10 Derrick Brown
Jeremy Williams W 8 Gary Gomez
Felipe Romero KO 8 Ricardo Arce
Francisco Palacios KO 6 Louis Azille
Yoan Hernandez KO 1 Daniel Bispo
Aaron Williams KO 1
Jeffrey Brownfield

Light Heavyweights

Glen Johnson KO 5 Fred Moore
Hugo Garay KO 1
Orlando Antonio Farias
Chris Henry KO 6 Derrick James
Daniel Bruwer KO 3 Eduardo Franca

Super Middleweights

Jean Pascal W 12 Kingsley Ikeke
Clinton Johnson W 10 Paz Viejo
Lukas Wilaschek W 10 Fawaz Nasir
Les Sherrington W 10 Sean Connell
David Lopez W 10 Larry Marks
Les Sherrington W 10 Sean Connell
Osmar Teixeira KO 4
Juan de la Cruz Solis
Marcelo Da Silva KO 4 Alex Olivei
Donovan George KO 3 Shay Mobley
Raul Marquez KO 2
Jay Pinara de Melo

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

Featherweight Jason Litzau makes quick work of Emmanuel Lucero

Middleweights

Arthur Abraham KO 11 Khoren Gevor
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Bronco McKart W 12 Enrique Ornelas
Elkeana Saunders W 12
Floyd Trumpet
Shannan Taylor KO 6
Terdkiat Siththeppitak
Michael Walker KO 2 Dante Craig
Farouk Daku KO 5 Joseph Odhiambo
Koji Sato KO 2 David Koswara
Mariano Carrera KO 1
Josival Teixeira
Joe Greene KO 1 Darryl Salmon

Junior Middleweights

Vernon Forrest W 12 Carlos Baldomir
(*Wins Vacant WBC Title*)
Kuvanych Toygonbayev W 12
Zviadi Purtskhvanidze
Ulises Lopez W 10 Juan Marino
Hiroshi Yamaguchi W 10
Aswin Cabuy
David Estrada KO 4 Luther Smith
Andre Berto W 10 Cosme Rivera
Ryan Waters KO 5 Ariel Omongos
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 5
Louis Brown
Tyrone Tongia KO 3 Jun Geraldino
Alfredo Angulo KO 3
Taronze Washington

Welterweights

Joshua Clottey W 10 Felix Flores
George Owano W 10 Hussein Chiwa
Oscar Medina W 12 Jorge Miranda
Tadashi Yuba KO 7 Masato Arai
Jesus Soto Karass KO 3
Jose Antonio Ojeda
Badru Lusambya KO 7
Lawrence Ngobeni
Ilian Aries KO 11 Adnan Oezcoban

Junior Welterweights

Emmanuel Lartey W 12
Kaiser Mabuza
Ali Chebah KO 4
Luiz Augusto Dos Santos
Juan Carlos Rodriguez KO 1
Ulises Duarte

Lightweights

David Diaz W 12 Erik Morales
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Jose Santa Cruz KO 2
Dairo Jose Esalas
Takeshi Kawanami W 10
Kazunori Fujita
Tsuyoshi Takayama W 10
Makoto Sakai
Tyrone Harris W 10 Rafael Ortiz
Humberto Mauro Gutierrez W 10
Jorge Juarez
Yoshimitsu Yashiro KO 7
Muangfahlek Kiatwichean
Shoji Kawase KO 7
Payator Twins Special
Jason Naule KO 7 Pius Dipheko
Nedal Hussein KO 5 Moses Seran
Kpakpo Allotey KO 5
Gabriel Phakula
Yoshihiro Kamegai KO 4
Yasuhiro Kondo
Jesus Gonzalez KO 3
Cristian Chavez
Luis Hernandez KO 2 Jesus Pabon
Ray Narh KO 1 Luis Bolano
Jorge Paez Jr. W 6 Jaime Orrantia
Juan Castanada W 6 Jose Magallon

Junior Lightweights

Thomas Aryeetey W 12
Odalai Lamptey
Alisher Rahimov W 12
Geoffrey Munika
Victor Manon W 10 Judefil Aclo
Thong Por Chokchai KO 6
Ryusei Yoshida
Nedal Hussein KO 5 Moses Seran
JR Sollano KO 4 Arnel Porras

Featherweights

Chris John KO 9 Zaiki Takemoto
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Guty Espadas KO 11 Moises Perez
Hector Velazquez Tech. Win 10
Mario Santiago
Yasuhito Aritomi W 10
Suriya Klongpajol
Toshiaki Nishioka KO 7
Jean Javier Sotelo
Michael Farenas KO 5 Jesar Ancajas
Antonio Davis KO 5 Leon Bobo
Jason Litzau KO 2 Emmanuel Lucero
Panlert Tor Saengtiennoi KO 5
Chawal Sor Vorapin
Eric Hunter W 8 Tyrell Samuel

Junior Featherweights

Israel Vazquez KO 6
Rafael Marquez
(*Regains World Title*)
Celestino Caballero W 12
Jorge Lacierva
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 1
Rey Bautista
Jake Verano W 12 Alex Escaner
Sergio Manuel Medina KO 6
Luis Perez Vicente
Juan Manuel Lopez KO 10
Hugo Dianzo
Jason Egera KO 10 Charlie Angel
Akifumi Shimoda W 10 Yu Enya
Rodolfo Lopez KO 3
Antonio Espinales
Antonio Escalante W 8
Paulino Villalobos
Kohei Ohba W 8 Yasuo Kijima
Kumarnthong Por Pluemkamol KO 5
Thongthai Rajanondh
Bernabe Concepcion KO 4
Gabriel Elizondo
Kosol Sor Vorapin KO 2
Su Zhen Yang

Bantamweights

Veeraphol Sahaprom KO 7
Makoto Tanigawa
Gerry Penalosa KO 7
Jhonny Gonzalez
Rolly Matsushita Lunas KO 12
Masayuki Mitani
Simone Maludrottu W 12
Mohamed Bouleghcha
Cristian Faccio W 10
Sergio Victor Caruso
Eduardo Garcia W 10 Arturo Estrada
Taengthong Klongjan KO 7
Dondon Jimenea
Takuro Kodama KO 3
Narongnoy Sor Worasin
Toyoto Shiraishi KO 2
Pongsak Pongcharoen
Lesley Sekotswe KO 1 Albert Madau
Takafumi Himeno W 8
Yuichiro Komuro

Junior Bantamweights

Martin Castillo W 10
Oscar Andrade
Z Gorres KO 8 Eric Ortiz
Juan Mercedes W 12 Marino Montiel
Francisco Bojado KO 10
Rogelio Castaneda
Duangpetch Saengmorakot KO 6
Marangin Marbun
Simphiwe Nongqayi KO 6
Feliciano Ledezma
Fatai Onikeke KO 3
Jakkirt Suwunnalirt
Mike Tawatchai KO 2
Rubenado Lepanbata

Flyweights

Masaharu Naganawa W 12
Jojo Bardon
Drian Francisco KO 1
Wanmeechok Singwangcha
Daiki Kameda W 10
Fahpetchnoi Sor Chitpattana
Koki Kameda W 10 Cesar Lopez
Junichi Ebisuoka W 10
Jose Antonio Aguirre
Irfan Ogah W 10
Hemarach Chaorai oy
Regina Halmich W 10
Wendy Rodriguez
Pablo Montenegro KO 4
Marlon Pineda
Hussein Hussein KO 3 Anis Ceunfin
Yuchi Eausampan KO 2
Petchpupan Sithkantaeng

Junior Flyweights

Ulises Solis KO 8 Rodel Mayol
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Edgar Sosa Disq. W Disq. 10
Luis Alberto Lazarte
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Daniel Reyes W 10
John Alberto Molina
Munetsugu Kayo W 10 Junji Okami
Omar Salado KO 3
Branni Guerrero Sandoval
Rexon Flores W 12
Terdkiat Jandaeng
Makoto Suzuki KO 7 Junpei Ito
Kompayak Porpramook KO 6
Wendell Cajoles
Wisanu Pornobnum KO 4 Ma Lei
Yuki Sano KO 3 Namchai Taksinisan

Strawweights

Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym W 12
Benjie Sorolla
Wanheng Menayothin W 10
Dennis Juntillano

Vernon Forrest W 12 Carlos Baldomir

Tacoma, Washington: A Forrest fire ran through the Emerald Queen Casino as Forrest smoked out Baldomir in a 12-round junior middleweight bout between former world welterweight champions and won the WBC title Floyd Mayweather vacated earlier this year. Forrest, 154, Atlanta, Georgia, used precision combinations and a swift jab to outbox and outfight a determined Baldomir, 154, Argentina, at the only venue in the Seattle-Tacoma area that still offers fans live professional boxing. The South American came to fight and kept the contest action-packed, but just didn't have the skill to win many rounds against the comebacking Forrest.

Baldomir, 43-11-6 (13), induced an ugly mouse under Forrest's right eye with hard left hooks as early as the second round, but never had the man who beat Shane Mosley twice in trouble. Toward the end of the round, Baldomir spun around in frustration, exasperated at his elusive foe.

In the fourth, Forrest, 39-2 (28), almost dropped Baldomir with a cracking right hand followed by a blistering hook, but the Argentine, who defeated Zab Judah for THE RING welterweight title to become the modern-day "Cinderella Man," never gave in.

In the sixth, there was an ugly clash of heads, and referee Mike Ortega (USA) warned both fighters to be more diligent. In the seventh, Baldomir engaged in a furious exchange with Forrest along the ropes, and the Argentine's bruised face began to swell from the telling blows of Forrest.

In the ninth, Ortega deducted a point from Forrest for hitting Baldomir low, and it was finally a winning round for the man who once supplemented his boxing income by selling feather dusters on the streets of Santa Fe.

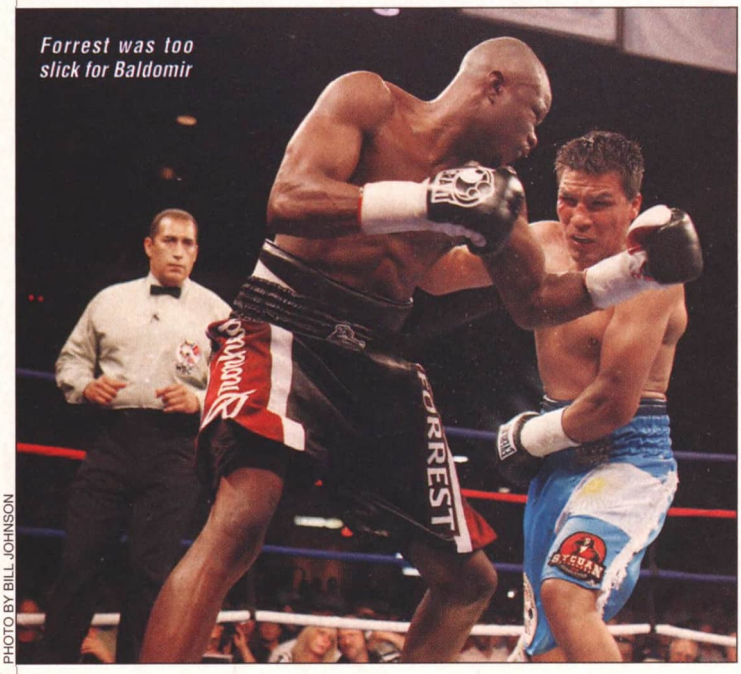
The ring generalship of Forrest was clearly evident throughout, and although Baldomir was the aggressor, it was his opponent who threw the cleanest, hardest punches and who displayed the most effective defense through the last three rounds.

Judges Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico) and Tom McDonough (USA) both had Forrest winning 118-109, while Anek Hongtongkam (Thailand) had Forrest ahead 116-111. THE RING had Forrest the winner by a score of 118-111.

"One-fifty-four is my weight class," Forrest said, "but I might be moving up to 160."

Baldomir took his defeat in stride, but was clearly disheartened by the result. "I thought I fought well, but this could be my last fight."

Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Brian Halquist Promotions, Sycuan Ringside Promotions**
Television: **HBO**
(7-28-07)
Oliver W. Tuthill Jr.



Forrest was too slick for Baldomir

PHOTO BY BILL JOHNSON

Jorge Linares KO 10 Oscar Larios

Las Vegas, Nevada: For his first fight in America, Linares took on tough former titleholder Larios for what was to be the "interim" WBC featherweight belt. As it turned out, shortly after the fight, full titleholder Injin Chi vacated, making this essentially a vacant title bout. But that trivial alphabet strap really wasn't the story here. The story was the impressive U.S. debut of the 21-year-old Linares, who got a 10th-round stoppage win and marked himself as one of the brightest stars on boxing's horizon.

Larios, 126, Guadalajara, Mexico, is typically the counterpuncher in his fights, using his solid boxing skills and footwork. But instead, against Linares, 126, Barinas, Venezuela, at the Mandalay Bay Events Center on the Hopkins-Wright undercard, he marched straight forward with very little head movement, allowing the unbeaten prospect to pick him off.

Linares, who now fights and lives in Tokyo, Japan, was happy enough to go backward. In the first few rounds, Larios, 30, pushed him hard and had good success. But after the first quarter of the fight, the cool, relaxed Linares started to step up the pace. They were each throwing hard left and right hooks to each other's body, but Linares' blows were more effective.

In the sixth round, Larios threw a right hand that landed on his opponent's head but left himself open for a left uppercut that followed from Linares. It cracked Larios clean on the chin, shaking him up, but the bell was in sight and he survived the round.

Linares was landing six- and seven-punch combinations to the head and body of the slowing Larios, 59-6-1 (37), but Larios showed a true champion's heart in the ninth, having success with right hands. It wasn't enough though, as Linares, 24-0 (15), persistently threw fast shots that were landing virtually at will.

The 10th round began with Linares moving around again while Larios sluggishly stalked him, uncharacteristically forcing his way in. Larios was carrying his left hand low and got hit with a right hand to the head. He was hurt, and Linares didn't let up. He landed a left hook followed by two right hands, sending the veteran down. Referee Vic Drakulich (USA) called the fight off at 2:37 of the round as the fans cheered in admiration of an exciting fight with a heroic loser giving it his all.

One judge had Larios up five rounds to four going into the 10th; the other two scorecards showed Linares well ahead at the time of the stoppage.

Linares said, "Today a new star was born. I proved to American fans what Linares is made of. I'm just 21 years old and I know I can do more after defeating a great fighter like Oscar Larios."

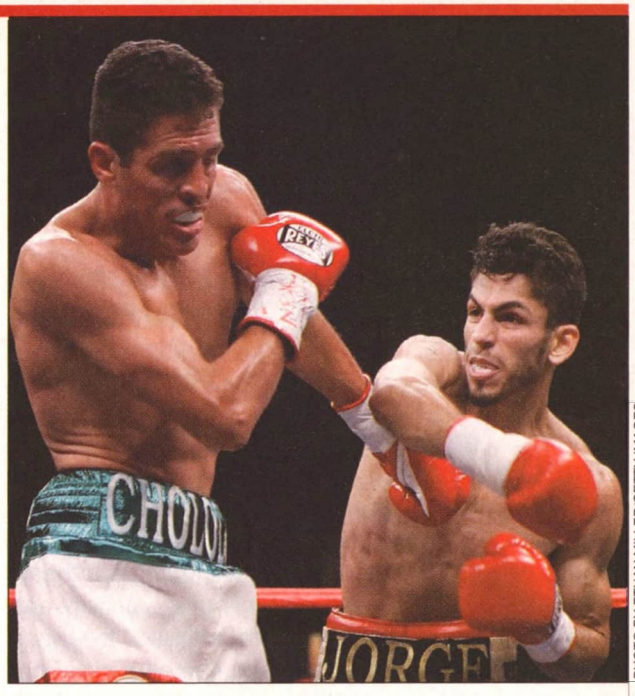


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Linares sends Larios reeling with a right

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Israel Vazquez

It's one thing to beat a man who has previously beaten you. It's another thing to *knock out* a man who has previously *knocked you out*. Israel Vazquez has now done that twice.

Few gave him a shot to defeat Oscar Larios for the world junior featherweight title in 2005, since Larios had beaten Vazquez by 12th-round kayo in a thrilling but conclusive fight three years earlier. Vazquez confidently dropped Larios in round one and stopped him on cuts in the third.

Similarly, Vazquez was a sizeable underdog against Rafael Marquez in August, since the supremely gifted Marquez had busted his nose and stopped him in seven rounds five months earlier to claim the world title. But Vazquez apparently doesn't believe in the notion of one man having another's number. He learns from his mistakes, he adjusts, and he evens the score. Against Marquez, he needed one less round to do it than Marquez needed against him, regaining the championship in the sixth round of a sensational fight.

There's no greater challenge in life than facing those people and things that have ruined you in the past and overcoming them. Vazquez has now achieved that twice. We feel sorry for the next poor fool who knocks him out.

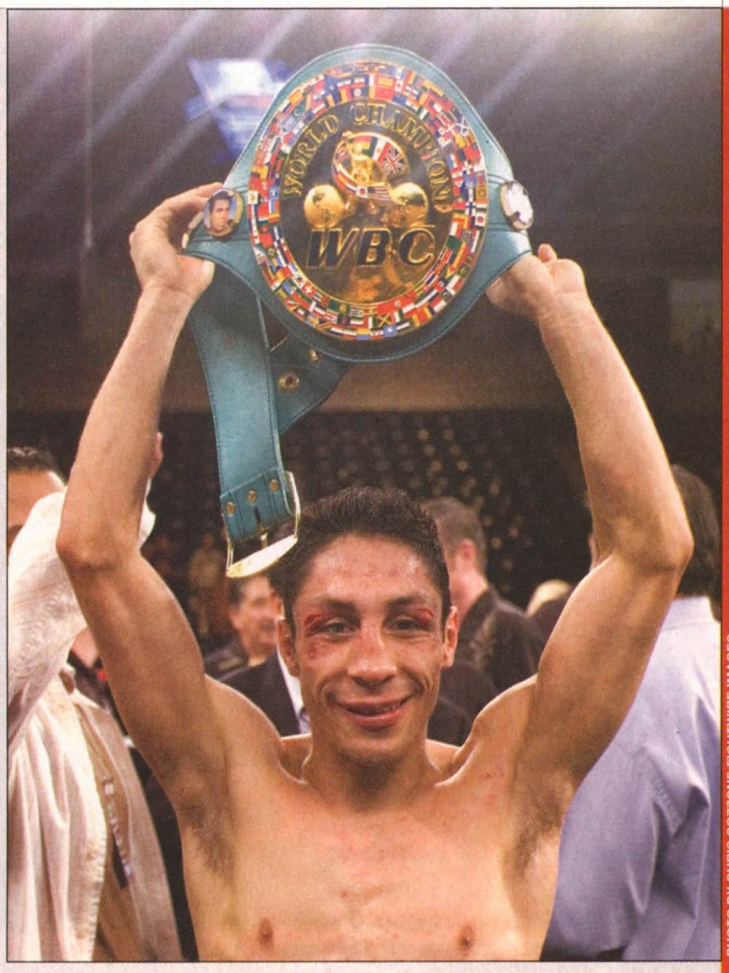


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Unfortunately, Larios suffered slight bleeding on the brain after the fight, but thankfully doctors made the diagnosis in time. Larios was admitted to Valley Hospital, where he spent the night for tests and observation.

According to Eric Gomez, vice president of Golden Boy Promotions, Larios planned to retire after the fight even before he knew about the brain bleed.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(7-21-07)
Wayne McCullough

Daisuke Naito W 12 Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

Tokyo, Japan: In perhaps the biggest upset of the year, Naito, 112, Japan, amazingly captured the WBC flyweight belt as he frustrated long-reigning southpaw Pongsaklek, 112, Thailand, with his tricky mobility and roundhouse attacks in earlier rounds, withstood the titlist's furious retaliation in the ninth, and earned a close but unanimous decision over 12 heats at Korakuen Hall. Pongsaklek, who may have been overconfident due to a pair of previous wins over Naito among his 17 successful title defenses, wasn't as sharp and fast as usual, and his late surge wasn't enough to make up for his early deficit.

Judge Hubert Minn (USA) scored it 115-113, and Stephen Blea (USA) and Bruce McTavish (Philippines) both saw it 116-113, all in favor of the Japanese underdog. The referee was Toby Gibson (USA).

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/GETTY IMAGES

Underdog Naito drives a right hand into Wonjongkam's head

It was, simply, a stunner. In his first encounter with Pongsaklek, Naito was demolished in just 34 seconds in 2002, setting the record for the shortest fight in flyweight title history. Pongsaklek beat Naito again, by seven-round technical decision, in 2005. No one expected Naito to win on the third try against a fighter who had been unbeaten in his last 56 bouts over 11 years. But anything can happen in the ring.

Indicating that his preparation was less than stellar, Pongsaklek failed to make the weight on his first attempt and had to shed 1¼ pounds. He did so after 50 minutes of extra time.

Naito, 32, got the fireworks started from the beginning of the opening round, landing big overhand rights and busily moving in and out to confuse the beltholder. Pongsaklek, 29, showed superior balance and poise and took the second as Naito missed plenty of powerful shots, once almost throwing himself through the ropes.

Naito was in command in the third and fourth as he landed wild right crosses and big left hooks. Pongsaklek sustained a cut over the right eyebrow in the fourth caused by a legal blow. After the fourth, the WBC open-scoring system showed Naito was ahead 39-37 (twice), while the third judge had it even at 38-38.

Naito, a very awkward hard puncher, dominated the fifth and sixth, as he stayed aggressive and landed solid right hands, one at a time, while Pongsaklek had yet to rev up his engine. The Thai, however, took the seventh and eighth, as the challenger's work rate slowed down due to his fast pace in earlier rounds. The official tallies after the eighth showed Naito to be still leading, 77-75, 77-76, and 76-76.

The ninth round was the most exciting of the fight, as Pongsaklek put forth a furious body bombardment and threw effective short punches that often snapped the fading challenger's head back. Pongsaklek almost landed the perfect shot to finish the affair, but Naito showed his durability. It was obviously Pongsaklek's round, but Naito retaliated just enough toward the end to keep it a 10-9 round.

With the fight hanging in the balance, it was Naito who was in command in the 10th and 11th, as he landed the more effective shots against his sluggish opponent. The 11th saw Naito connect with a big right that stunned the fading beltholder. Pongsaklek, 65-3 (34), admirably had some dominating moments the 12th round, throwing impressive combinations while the exhausted Naito fought back with what little he had left.

It was never an easy fight for Naito, 31-2-2 (20), who burst into tears after the announcement of the upset decision. "I had learned some lessons from my two previous defeats by Pongsaklek," he said. "I did my best to respond to my supporters. He was a great champ, but I beat him to win the belt."

Promoter: **Miyata Promotions**
(7-18-07)
Joe Koizumi

Roy Jones W 12 Anthony Hanshaw

Biloxi, Mississippi: At age 38, Jones may be a shell of his former self, but it speaks highly for how good his former self was that he can still stay a step ahead of a solid, unbeaten young fighter like Hanshaw. To the delight of the pro-Jones crowd at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum, the four-division former titleholder scored a comfortable decision win over his hungry but slightly under-equipped opponent, his second consecutive points victory since back-to-back-to-back losses in '04 and '05.

As in his win over Prince Badi Ajamu a year earlier, Jones, 175, Pensacola, Florida, was somewhat lacking in the power department, meaning that he at times had trouble holding off the 29-year-old Hanshaw, 175, Warren, Ohio. Depending on what the judges liked, it was possible to give Hanshaw several rounds for applying consistent pressure. The problem was that it wasn't effective pressure. Jones was quicker and slicker and stayed out of danger, and he scored with enough potshots and quick combinations to earn points most rounds.

The highlight came in round 11, when Jones freed himself from the ropes with a quick right hand, then staggered Hanshaw with a precise left-right combination. After a body bump from Jones, "The Tiger" fell to his knees, and referee Keith Hughes (USA) gave him a count. Hanshaw, 21-1-1 (14), recovered and was never in serious danger again, but it was an adequate exclamation point for Jones and his diehards.

The scores of the three American judges were inconsistent but unanimous. David Taranto had it 118-109 and Bill Clancy saw it 117-110, while Gary Ritter scored 114-113, seemingly giving a bit too much credit to the man who was moving forward throughout.

"They say you've got to pass the torch? Well, you've got to pass it when the time comes and I think my time hasn't come yet," said Jones, 51-4 (38). "I've got a little more business I have to clean up."

In mid-August, Don King announced that Jones would face comebacking Felix Trinidad in January 2008 at a catchweight of 170 pounds.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Square Ring**
(7-14-07)

Celestino Caballero W 12 Jorge Lacierva

***Hidalgo, Texas*:** Junior featherweight beltholder Caballero had hoped to build steam for a shot at the 122-pound world title with a voluntary defense on the Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez II undercard. Instead, he nearly lost the WBA trinket to the vet Lacierva, then saw his sloppy win swallowed in the shadow of a Fight of the Year candidate.

With Vazquez and Marquez headed toward a rubber match, it doesn't appear that the awkward Caballero, THE RING'S number-two contender, will be fighting for the title anytime soon. His performance against Lacierva certainly didn't create any demand.

Despite a seven-inch height advantage and a six-inch edge in reach, the gangly 5'11" Caballero, 27-2 (18), elected to fight at close range. That played into the hands of Lacierva, 32-7-6 (22), who worked his way inside behind a torrid pace. He set the tone in the first, connecting with a lunging left hook to the head one minute into bout and ending the round with a sharp right uppercut.

The 29-year-old Lacierva, who hadn't fought for a belt since falling short against Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson in 1999, had his best round of the night in the third. Fighting at an even busier pace, he got inside and made Caballero miss badly at times. "Baby Face" landed several big shots, including a right uppercut in the final 30 seconds that stunned the Panamanian, who was making the second defense of the belt he took from Somsak Sithchatchawal last October in Thailand.

Lacierva, 121½, slowed down in the fourth, when Caballero, 121, established some distance and did enough to win his first round on THE RING'S scorecard. The next five rounds were back and forth, with Lacierva taking the fifth, seventh, and ninth, and Caballero outboxing the Mexico-born Atlanta resident in the sixth and eighth.

Referee Laurence Cole (Texas) struggled to maintain control of an often dirty and ugly fight. He took a key point away from Lacierva in the sixth for a headbutt, but never penalized Caballero, who used an assortment of illegal tactics throughout.

"He was just hitting me with the elbow, the headbutt," Lacierva said. "While he was holding me, he was hitting me in the head, he was hitting me in the body, everywhere. He's a difficult fighter. He hit me with a couple of fouls, and the referee never took a point away."

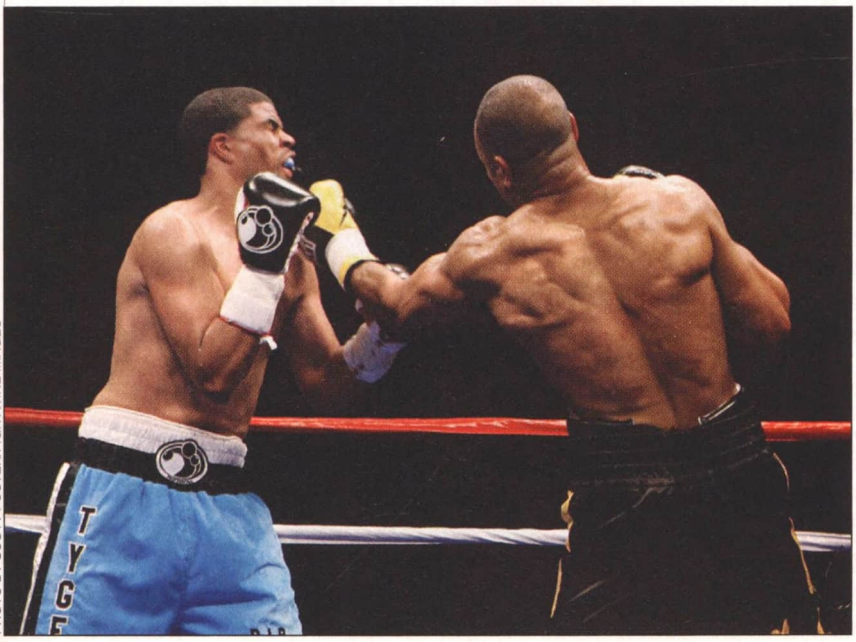


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Jones continued his comeback by outpointing Hanshaw

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Caballero's left hook finds Lacierva's jaw

With his corner telling him he was down by four points, a suddenly busier Caballero dominated the 10th and 11th from long range. A tired Lacierva found the energy to work his way back inside in the 12th, but Caballero landed enough right hands and uppercuts to take a close round.

All three judges scored it for Caballero. Levi Martinez (USA) saw it 115-112, while Rafael Ramos (USA) and Dr. Ruben Garcia (USA) had it a more lopsided 116-111 and 116-110, respectively. THE RING had Caballero winning 114-113.

"He's a veteran of wars," the 31-year-old Caballero said. "I respect him as a fighter. He did a great job tonight."

Television: **Showtime**

Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Sycuan Ringside Promotions**

(8-4-07)

Ulises Solis KO 8 Rodel Mayol

Rosemont, Illinois: There's little doubt the swollen, shrieking crowd at the Allstate Arena was there to see Erik Morales and David Diaz in the main event (well, more Morales than Diaz, let's be honest). But they got more than they bargained for when Solis and Mayol put on a nice little slugfest of their own that would have been quite a sufficient main event on most other cards. In fact, if Diaz-Morales hadn't turned out to be the corker it was, Solis' exciting knockout win might have stolen the show.

Those familiar with Solis due to his wins over Will Grigsby and Jose Antonio Aguirre know he's a left-hooking little dynamo who can crack with either hand and loves to go downstairs. THE RING'S top light flyweight contender is all fighter. Less was known going into the bout about Mayol, 108, just that here was yet another puncher imported from the Philippines. (Are there any young guys over there anymore who *aren't* fighters?) We'd find out about him soon enough, as would Solis, 108, Guadalajara, Mexico.

Over the first three rounds, Solis, making his fifth defense of the IBF 108-pound title, put on a clinic, jabbing well, banging Mayol's body, and cranking up zinging left uppercuts as Mayol advanced. He moved his head just enough to keep out of the way of Mayol's poorly aimed but earnest straight rights. In the fourth, Mayol finally opened up, and you wondered then why he'd kept his hands to himself over the first three rounds. He landed about every punch there is to land and clearly won the round.

Mayol, 25, went back to looking for the one big punch in the fifth and found it, finally, in the sixth. His left hook landed before Solis' right uppercut could and when it did, down went Solis. The groping, slow-motion manner in which he fell fooled referee John O'Brien (USA), who ruled it a slip. It didn't fool Mayol, who hurt Solis again later in the round and then staggered him yet again midway through the seventh.

Just when it appeared Mayol, 23-2 (18), might take over, he charged headlong into a crackling one-two in the eighth that was as pretty as anything Roy Jones ever put together, and down he went for O'Brien's full count. All over at 1:13 of the round. Clearly, it's time we saw the 25-year-old Solis, 25-1-2 (19), against world champion Hugo Cazares. And if there's any justice in the world, it'll be the main event.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**

Promoter: **Top Rank**

(8-4-07)

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Solis reaches for Mayol's chin

Cristian Mijares KO 10 Teppei Kikui

Durango, Mexico: In a one-sided but entertaining fight at the Auditorio Centenario in Mijares' hometown, the skillful Mexican made his third defense of the WBC super flyweight strap, turning away unknown and undeserving Japanese chal-

lenger Kikui at 2:28 of the 10th round. The fight proved little, but delighted the highly enthusiastic local fans just the same.

Kikui, 115, had his best round in the opener, arguably winning a battle of jabs against the southpaw Mijares, 115. Late in the second, Mijares shook Kikui with a left cross and never looked back. Mijares' jab became an increasingly useful weapon, and uppercuts gradually found the mark too. With open scoring in effect, it was revealed after four rounds that none of the judges gave the visitor the first round and that Mijares was leading 40-36 on all cards. And the scores would only get more lopsided from there.

In the sixth, Mijares, 25, hurt Kikui, 28, in the midst of a violent exchange and had him trapped on the ropes and covering up. More damage was done in the eighth, when an uppercut rocked the challenger, who barely made it through the round on his feet. In the 10th, Mijares showed his ring intelligence by shifting his attack to the body, and several hard rib shots caused Kikui obvious anguish. Mercifully, ref Frank Garza (USA) stepped in and saved Kikui, 21-6 (4), at just the right time, when it was clear all the resistance had been beaten out of him.

Mijares, 32-3-2 (13), looks to have another potentially easy defense on tap, a scheduled October 20 meeting in Cancun with the 16-7 (7) Frenchman Franck Gorjux.

Promoter: **KO Entertainment**

(7-13-07)

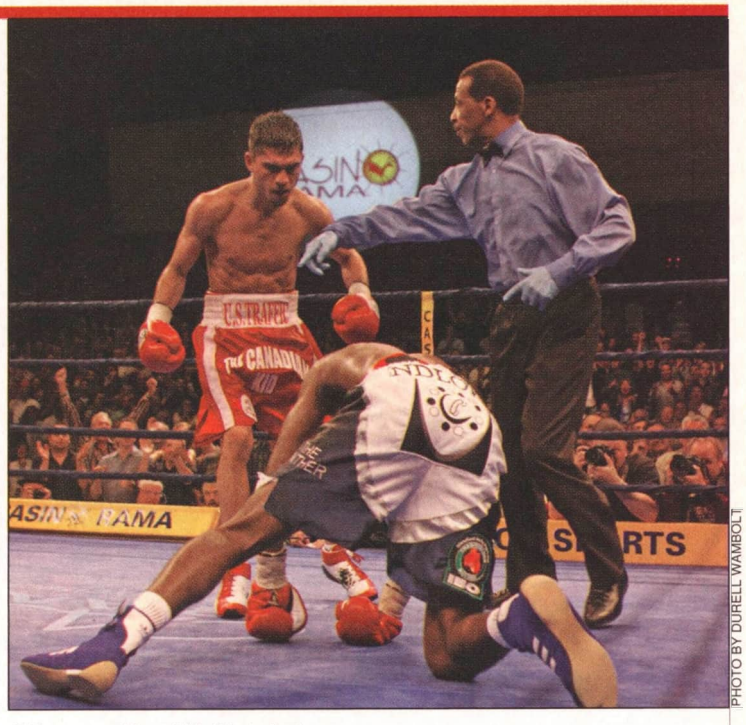


PHOTO BY DURELL WAMBOLT

Ndlovu crumbles at Molitor's feet

Steve Molitor KO 9 Takalani Ndlovu

Rama, Ontario: The old maxim that suggests a newly crowned titlist improves by 25 percent appeared in strict evidence in Molitor's knockout of South Africa's Ndlovu, indicating the 28-year-old may be on a fast track to becoming one of the 122-pound division's elite competitors. Sarnia, Ontario-native Molitor, dubbed "The Canadian Kid," already had a reputation for being an extraordinary technician prior to winning the vacant WBC belt last November in Hartlepool, England, against Michael Hunter. But after his impressive fifth-round kayo over Hunter and a highlight-reel knockout against Ndlovu, it's clear Molitor's recently discovered power has added a critical dimension to his game and turned him into a complete fighter.

Showcasing his skills before 5,200 at Casino Rama marked a triumphant homecoming for Molitor, who has quietly built his career mostly as a road warrior. And although plenty of hype attended the buildup to his first defense, it was clear the Kid's newfound celebrity at home did little to undermine his focus.

Ndlovu, 121, entered the bout as a worthy challenger known for his heavy hands and a pair of questionable decision losses to countryman Vuyani Bungu on his 27-4 (17) ledger, but from the outset it was clear that southpaw Molitor's exceptional hand speed and combination punching would be the deciding factors in the fight.

Some swift footwork by Molitor, 121¾, in the early rounds made him a frustrating target for Ndlovu, 29, who plodded forward but found it difficult to cut off the ring. Molitor fought virtually every minute moving in wide circles, often with his back to the ropes, while settling down only long enough to score with rapid-fire combinations to the head and debilitating hooks to the body that would pay dividends by the middle rounds.

Ndlovu was able to close the gap in the fourth after ratcheting up his attack and slowing Molitor with a left hook to the body. Still, Molitor's workrate proved superior as he strafed Ndlovu's body with hooks and snapped the South African's head back with a crisp right uppercut. By round's end, Ndlovu would return to his corner bleeding from the mouth.

In his only winning round, the fifth, Ndlovu continued to press his offense, managing to catch a slowing Molitor with several lead rights. His mouth gaping in the sixth, however, Ndlovu began to show the effects of Molitor's sustained bodywork as the challenger found himself increasingly outmaneuvered and outpunched in the ensuing rounds. Showing his usual finesse, Molitor darted in and out and rattled off multi-punch combinations to build a significant lead.

In the ninth, the Canadian was in full control, establishing a commanding jab before coming off his toes to land a decisive right hook that sent Ndlovu collapsing to the canvas. Ndlovu looked unsteady as he regained his legs, and immediately found himself swarmed and dropped to all fours once again. Clearly out on his feet, Ndlovu groped for a clinch after rising for the second time, but tumbled to the mat once more as Molitor chopped away inside, attempting to land the finishing blow.

With no three-knockdown rule in effect, Ndlovu would courageously rise a final time for Canadian referee Hubert Earle's eight-count despite more than half the round remaining on the clock. Molitor was more deliberate this time, wading in and selectively hammering away as Ndlovu reeled helplessly

around the ring before Earle stepped in to rescue the beaten fighter at 1:12 of the round.

"We had a great game plan; we knew we were going to break him down," said Molitor, 24-0 (10) "He was lunging a lot with his punches and stepping forward. I knew it would be just a matter of time before I caught him with some hard shots."

New Jersey-based promoter Ricardo Salazar is currently embroiled in a lawsuit with Molitor's longtime promoters, Orion Sports Management, claiming breach of contract over an agreement that allegedly entitles him to promote Molitor and share in profits from his fights anywhere outside of Canada, the U.K., and western New York State. With the case still pending in the Ottawa courts, Molitor will likely remain in Canada for his next bout, scheduled for this fall against an opponent yet to be named.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Luevano floored Cook five times in dominating performance

According Alan Tremblay of Orion, it's an option that that sits well after so many years of putting Molitor on the road: "We'd like to keep him at home. He deserves to be at home after all this time." Given the impressive live gate for the Ndlovu fight, Canadian fans would seem to agree.

Promoter: **Orion Sports Management**
(7-14-07)
Paul Salgado

Steve Luevano KO 11 Nicky Cook

London, England: Cook, 125¾, Dagenham, England, had tasted disappointment before when Scott Harrison's troubles with the law forced the cancellation of their bout, but it did not compare to this. From the outset, the British, Commonwealth, and European featherweight titleholder was outgunned and in trouble against Luevano, 125¾, La Puente, California, and the cruel finale, in spite of his bravery, was almost inevitable as the slick American claimed the WBO 126-pound belt at the O2 Arena.

Floored five times in total, on the final occasion for the 10-count, Cook's night degenerated from the moment his car was caught in traffic en route to the arena and he had to abandon it to complete his journey by train. "He was stuck in a traffic jam and realized he would not get to the O2 Arena in time for his fight," explained his father and trainer, Paul Cook. "Luevano turned out to be a very good southpaw, and Nicky just could not settle into his normal rhythm, getting to work behind his jab. He fought bravely in a tough fight and, thankfully, the only injury he has suffered is a real dent to his pride."

Cook, 27-1 (15), had set his heart on victory, but a hard left to the temple in the second round floored him and shook his confidence and, despite beating British referee Dave Parris' count, he never fully recovered. Luevano, 33-1 (15), a former stock manager for Victoria's Secret, maintained control throughout with his southpaw jab and slick punching. He was also more powerful than his record had suggested, plus he withstood Cook's courageous efforts to find a way back into the fight, soaking up shots to his head and body and retaliating fiercely.

Twice in the ninth round, Luevano, 26, sent Cook, 27, to the canvas with sickening shots to the body, and Cook, whose face bore the signs of a prolonged beating, went down again in the 10th, as much from exhaustion and the accumulation of punches he had taken than from one particular blow. Finally, in the penultimate round, Luevano landed a left to the pit of the stomach that removed the last vestige of fight from Cook's body, and he went down and was counted out by Parris at the 0:29 mark.

"Nicky had never fought anyone like me and I caught him with a variety of punches the whole night," Luevano reflected. "He fought a brave fight, but I had come too long a way to be denied."

Promoter: **Sports Network**
(7-14-07)
Brian Doogan

Florante Condes W 12 Muhammad Rachman

Jakarta, Indonesia: Capable fighters from the Philippines are in plentiful supply these days, and we can now add Condes to the list after the man known as "Little Pacquiao" used a couple of knockdowns to outpoint Rachman on the defending IBF minimumweight titlist's home turf, spoiling "The Rock Breaker's" fourth defense.

In a crowd-pleasing brawl at RCTI TV Studio, the southpaw Condes, 104, showed the aggression of the man after whom he is nicknamed, throwing nasty punches in bunches in the second round and scoring a knockdown in the third. It was a quick, flush left uppercut that put Rachman, 104½, on the canvas, ref Wayne Hedgepeth (USA) reaching the count of eight before he arose. But the 35-year-old gathered himself and worked his way back into the fight. He trapped Condes, 27, along the ropes numerous times, especially in the eighth and ninth rounds, when the Filipino seemed to be tiring. Heading into round 10, Rachman appeared likely to retain his belt.

But in the 10th, the Indonesian grew careless as he focused on offense, and a light counter right hand from Condes, 22-3-1 (20), caught Rachman off-balance and sent him down, creating a crucial scoring swing. "I was sloppy in my defense," Rachman, 61-6-5 (31), said. "It shouldn't have happened."

But it did, and at the end of 12, the split decision went Condes' way. Muhammad Rois (Indonesia) dubiously scored 114-112 for Rachman, but he was overruled by Salven Lagumbay (Philippines) and Montol Suriyachand (Thailand), who had it 115-111 and 114-112, respectively, for Condes.

A rematch is being discussed, though Condes' people indicated that they would likely look another direction for his first defense.

(7-7-07)

Enzo Maccarinelli W 12 Wayne Braithwaite

Cardiff, Wales: Perhaps it is the tuition he is now getting from Enzo Calzaghe or the sparring sessions in which he engages regularly with Enzo's son, Joe, THE RING super middleweight champion, but Maccarinelli, 194, Swansea, Wales, is developing more and more into a formidable force at the highest level of the cruiserweight division. Braithwaite, 195¼, Brooklyn, New York, via Georgetown, Guyana, was competitive only two years ago when he fought Jean-Marc Mormeck for THE RING cruiserweight title, but he was soundly outpointed at the Cardiff International Arena in a bout for Maccarinelli's WBO belt.

Of course, Braithwaite, 22-3 (18), was stopped in four rounds by Guillermo Jones five months after losing to Mormeck and had boxed just once in two years when he stopped Gustavo Enriquez in February before climbing into the ring to face the Welshman. Still, Maccarinelli's win was impressive, for he handled the man nicknamed "Big Truck" well throughout, proving assertive with his jab and demonstrating greater power, a point punctuated by the only knockdown of the fight in the fifth round.

Now 26, Macarinelli is able to physically dominate opponents in much the same way he handled Braithwaite, whom he hurt with his trademark left hook in the opening round before crashing another off the American's jaw. Braithwaite retreated to the ropes and took several more hooks in the second round, as the Welshman began to utilize his jab and find places to land his right hand. In the fifth, his left hook found the mark again and this time Braithwaite fell under the force of the blow and British referee Mickey Vann issued the mandatory eight-count. What made the knockdown even more significant was the fact that Maccarinelli had absorbed a hard right uppercut just moments before and was able to rebound from the shock and retaliate emphatically.

In fact, Braithwaite, 31, was dangerous through much of the bout, but Maccarinelli kept his southpaw opponent in check with his stiff jab and hard punching. He attacked the American's body in the middle rounds and hurt him again with his right uppercut in the seventh and ninth rounds. Maybe he could have done more to try to secure a win by stoppage, but at the final bell he had left no doubt about the result.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Maccarinelli has Braithwaite sagging along the ropes

All three judges scored for Maccarinelli by wide margins, Noel Monnet (France) 118-109, Manuel Oliver Palomo (Spain) 120-107, and Victor Salomon (Mexico) 119-108. THE RING also scored 118-109 for Maccarinelli, 27-1 (20), whose only loss, a third-round stoppage by Lee Swaby, occurred seven years ago when he was an immature 18-year-old.

"It was a tough match against a former WBC titleholder, one of the top fighters in the world in this weight division, and I won well," said Maccarinelli. "I dominated with my jab, neglected the right hand a bit because I hurt it early on, but the jab kept me in it and he took some great shots. I could throw my right, but it was painful every time I threw it. Wayne's a tough man, and I showed I could take a shot on the chin. I also showed I can box and that I have great stamina. I'm pleased with my performance."

Promoter Frank Warren revealed that he had opened negotiations with Don King in an attempt to set up a clash between Maccarinelli and IBF titleholder Steve Cunningham, which he hoped to stage on the undercard of Calzaghe-Mikkel Kessler on November 3 at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff.

Promoter: **Sports Network**

(7-21-07)

Brian Doogan

Gavin Rees W 12 Souleymane Mbaye

Cardiff, Wales: Not much in the career and life of Rees, 139, Newbridge, Wales, suggested that he would ever rub shoulders with the elite of the junior welterweight division, but a thoroughly deserved victory on points against Mbaye, 139,

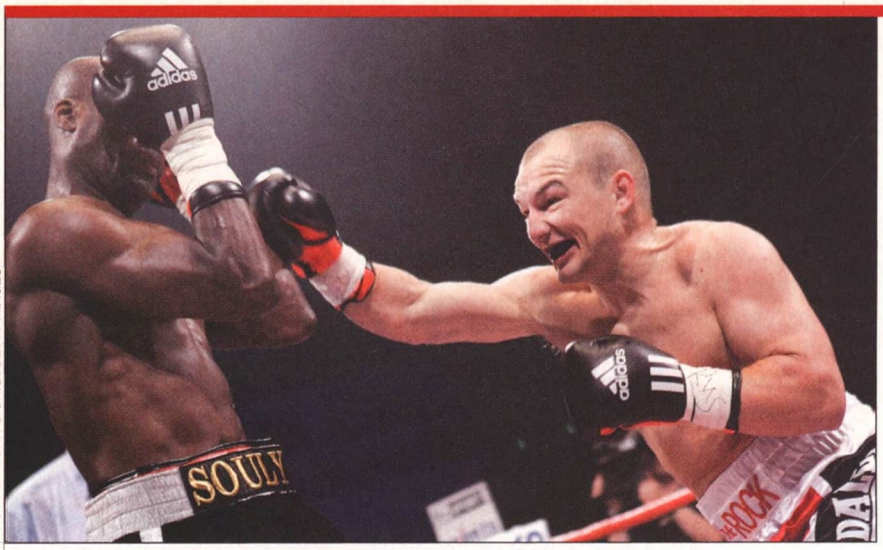


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Unheralded Rees storms to upset victory over Mbaye

Levallois-Perret, France, earned him the WBA junior welterweight title at the Cardiff International Arena and entry to the upper echelons of his domain.

Three years ago, the 27-year-old stood in the dock at Cardiff Crown Court, fearing that his boxing career could be over after he admitted to an incident at a funeral service when he knocked a fellow mourner unconscious. "I thought I was going down for four years," he admitted. But he escaped with a community service sentence and a yearlong ban from the ring and made the most of his second chance. Still, he was engaging in undercard bouts of six and eight rounds, and in his fight previous to facing Mbaye won on points over six rounds on the Millennium Stadium show that featured Joe Calzaghe vs. Peter Manfredo. His opponent, Billy Smith from Worcester, England, had a record of nine wins and 47 defeats, so it was a surprise even when promoter Frank Warren announced Rees as an opponent for Mbaye, who won the WBA belt against faded Raul Balbi in September 2006 after Ricky Hatton had vacated.

"I kept training throughout my 12-month ban and I can't thank Enzo [Calzaghe, his trainer] enough for keeping faith with me when I gave him more than one good reason to kick me out," Rees acknowledged going into the bout. "I've had trouble making weight and other problems outside the ring before, but I can't afford to let myself or Enzo down this time."

He did not. From the opening bell, he attacked Mbaye, 32, with the kind of sustained effort that required more from the Frenchman than he was willing to offer in order to put Rees back in his place. The challenger went for Mbaye's body and maintained a high-energy pace and, although he did not leave Mbaye in a daze or even in imminent danger, he managed to seize control and convince himself early on that it was within his power to win the fight.

Mbaye, 35-2-1 (20), retaliated with a solid jab and an impressive array of combination punching, but Rees was simply not to be denied. He survived the Frenchman's best shots and continued to wade in aggressively, hurting Mbaye to the body in the sixth and seventh rounds and then to the jaw with a left hook in the eighth. Over the closing rounds, it was merely a matter of whether he could maintain his energy and ambition, which he did, in large part due to the urgings of his trainer. At the final bell, Rees was convinced that he had won, as was the home crowd and, crucially, all three judges.

Paul Thomas (England) scored 117-112 (the same as THE RING), John Coyle (England) 117-113, and Cesar Ramos (Puerto Rico) 118-110, all for Rees. The referee was Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa).

"I outpunched him in every round and, even though I started to tire towards the end, I knew I had won the first eight rounds and the fight was won. I just had to keep going," said an emotional Rees, 27-0 (13). "No one expected me to do this, to beat Mbaye, no one at all, but I had faith in myself and Enzo had faith in me, and it's an incredible feeling now to be holding the belt."

Promoter: **Sports Network**
(7-21-07)
Brian Doogan

Edgar Sosa W Disq. 10 Luis Lazarte

Cancun, Mexico: Making his first defense of the WBC 108-pound title that he won via upset decision over Brian Viloria, Sosa picked a challenger who had already tried unsuccessfully to win a major title on three occasions. Not surprisingly, Sosa made it four. But Lazarte did come to fight and gave the 27-year-old Mexican a rough night at the Plaza de Toros, eventually losing by disqualification in the 10th round after throwing repeated low blows.

In the early rounds, 36-year-old veteran Lazarte, 107¾, Buenos Aires, Argentina, was using his assortment of unorthodox tricks to give Sosa trouble. But in the middle rounds, Sosa, 108, Mexico City, began to take over, and after nine rounds, he'd built a slight lead on all three judges' scorecards. That lead became irrelevant, however, in the 10th, when Lazarte, having been warned and penalized already, was disqualified by referee Hector Afu (Panama) at the 2:46 mark for punching low.

The loss snapped a 17-fight winning streak for Lazarte, 37-8-1 (17), and marked the fourth DQ loss of his career. Sosa advanced to 28-5 (14) with his 16th straight win since dropping a majority decision in 2003 to Ulises Solis, now a fellow beltholder.

Promoters: **Jose A. Gomez, Golden Boy Promotions**
(7-28-07)

Andre Berto W 10 Cosme Rivera

Saratoga Springs, New York: Many experts consider

2004 Olympian Berto the best prospect in the welterweight division. But Rivera is earning a reputation as the toughest gatekeeper in the 147-pound class, and he lived up to that reputation in scoring a shocking knockdown against Berto and making the 23-year-old bomber work hard to win by far the most challenging fight of his young career.

Everything was going according to plan for Berto, 146, Winter Haven, Florida, in the early rounds. His hands were much quicker than those of Rivera, 147, Culiacan, Mexico, and midway through the first round, he buzzed the 31-year-old with a hard right to the head. Rivera tried to move, keep his distance, and pick his spots, but Berto was having none of it, applying pressure and sweeping the first five rounds of the fight. The young man who represented Haiti in the Athens Olympics did particularly well in rounds four and five, rocking Rivera with powershots.

But Berto's dominance may have gone to his head in the sixth, when he waded in with little regard for defense, looking to close the show, and Rivera fired off a perfect left uppercut to the jaw. Berto's head popped up and then his body hurtled down, and he found himself on his hands and knees and taking a count from referee Charlie Fitch (USA). He looked dazed as he rose, but the timing was fortuitous for the unbeaten fighter, as the bell rang to end the round before Rivera could follow up. Speaking of fortuitous timing, Berto had been having problems with his right glove a round earlier, and his corner picked a *very* interesting time to remove and replace the glove, buying Berto an extra 30 seconds of rest between rounds. It was impossible not to think of Angelo Dundee tampering with the glove of Muhammad Ali after Henry Cooper knocked him down in their famous 1963 bout.

When the bout resumed, Berto quickly reclaimed control, although Rivera, 30-11 (21), remained active and dangerous. Berto opened up a nasty cut on the corner of Rivera's right eyelid, but the bloody veteran kept pushing Berto as best he could. His best, however, was not enough to win any rounds other than his 10-8 stanza in the sixth, and at the end of 10, judges Tom Schreck (USA) and Billy Costello (USA) both had it 98-91 for Berto, while Wayne Kelly (USA) found one more round to give to Rivera and had it 97-92.

Next up for Berto, 19-0 (16), is another step up, against fringe contender David Estrada. Like the bout against Rivera, it rates to be a fight he wins, and a fight he learns from.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoters: **DiBella Entertainment, Pugnacious Promotions**
(7-27-07)

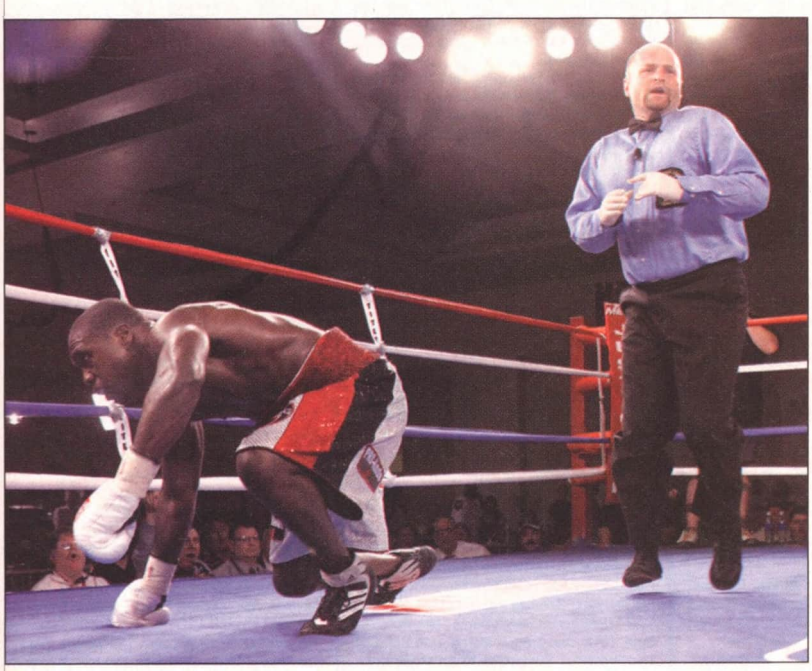


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Berto recovered from sixth-round knockdown to beat Rivera

Joel Julio KO 8 Cornelius Bundrage

Hollywood, California: Well, there's no dog in "K9." But all the heart in the world was never going to make up for the disparity in skill and technique between world-class prospect Julio and reality-show alum Bundrage. Winning his fifth straight in a busy 10-month period since an upset loss to Carlos Quintana, the 22-year-old Julio used his four-inch height advantage, superior speed, heavier hands, and smoother delivery to dominate the entire bout and drop and stop *The Contender* season two semifinalist Bundrage in the eighth round of a scheduled 10 at the Kodak Theater.

Julio, 151½, Miami, Florida, via Monteria, Colombia, won the first two rounds without doing much damage to Bundrage, 151½, Detroit, Michigan. But the damage started in the third and never let up. Late in the round, a left hook-right cross combination rocked Bundrage, 34, back on his heels and sent him staggering into the ropes. Julio pounced with a torrent of powershots, and a left hook knocked Bundrage off-balance enough that his right glove .touched the canvas, leading to an eight-count from referee Jack Reiss (USA). Bundrage had a decent comeback round in the fourth, but Julio took over again in the fifth, and by the end of the seventh, K9 was not only taking a pounding, but also bleeding from around his right eye.

Bundrage's brave absorption of punishment came to an end in the eighth. Thirty seconds into the round, a long right hand from Julio, 32-1 (30), sent K9 careening across the ring, and, though he maintained his footing, he was in bad shape. The Colombian followed up with a right to the jaw along the ropes, and down went Bundrage, flat on his back. Showing plenty of guts, Bundrage, 26-3 (15), rose at the count of six, but Julio quickly fed him one clean power-punch after another, until Reiss had no choice but to step in at the 1:08 mark.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Main Events**
(7-11-07)

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June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, best fighter poll.

Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

Aug. 1992: Bowe Knows The Big Fight: The Top Contender Analyzes Holmes-Holyfield. Color Pinup: Julian Jackson. Interview: Michael Spinks. Also: Thomas Hearns, Blue Horizon, fighting fear, Toney-Barkley, Greg Haugen.

Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, Ali-Shavers.

Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

Feb. 1993: Strictly Business: George Foreman Fights For The Love Of It—The Money! Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: George Benton. Also: Tracy Spann, Oba Carr, greatest eras.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

May 1993: Recapping The Future: Julio Cesar Chavez' Road To 100-0. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Junior Jones. Also: Buddy McGirt, Riddick Bowe, Raul Marquez.

Dec. 1993: The *KO* Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Also: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

Dec. 1996: Andrew Golota—Taking The Low Road to Stardom. Color Pinup: Mark Johnson. Interview: Rock Newman. Also: De La Hoya-Gonzalez, Chuck Bodak, bizarre endings, Chavez-Rosario.

Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Also: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

Feb. 1997: *KO's* 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Also: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

Nov. 1997: Filling In The Missing Pieces: What "The Bite" Means To Boxing. Color Pinup: Christy Martin. Interview: Jim Lampley. Also: Vince Phillips, British prospects, Iran Barkley.

Holiday 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Holyfield-Moorer II: Can Evander Avenge His Ugliest Defeat? Color Pinup: Vince Phillips. Interview: Mills Lane. Also: Roy Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Also: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou

Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

May 1998: Living Up To The Hype: Sometimes They Do … Sometimes They Don't. Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Best Of … (Part III). Also: Naseem Hamed, Marty Denkin, women's boxing.

June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield: Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Also: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Also: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

Nov. 1998 The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Tim Austin. Also: Cesar Bazan, Spencer Oliver, Bobby Czyz.

Dec. 1998: Winning Fights Is Easier Than Winning Fans: Why Can't We Appreciate Roy Jones? Color Pinup: Tim Austin. Interview: Michael Grant. Also: Christy Martin, Ali Reform Act, one-hit wonders.

Holiday 1998: Toe-To-Toe With The Top 10: Where Does Tyson Fit In? Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Inteview: Larry Hazzard. Also: Evander Holyfield, junior middleweights.

Jan. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Oscar Eliminates Chavez … Now The Real Fights Begin! Color Pinup: Yory Boy Campas. Interview: William Joppy. Also: Mark Johnson, U.S.A. vs. the world.

Feb. 1999: Holyfield & Lewis: Did They Hurt Themselves Before They Could Hurt Each Other? Color Pinup: Andrew Golota. Interview: Angel Manfredy. Also: Mismatches, Bobby Czyz on watching fights.

March 1999: Exposed! Is Hamed Really Hector Camacho In Disguise? Color Pinup: Mike Tyson. Interview: Joe Frazier. Also: Zab Judah, Vuyani Bungu, Frankie Randall.

May 1999: The Tyson Of Old … Or Just An Old Tyson? Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Antonio Diaz, Sumya Anani, standing eight-count.

June 1999: Will Tyson's Jail Time Be A Career Killer? Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Floyd Mayweather. Also: Roy Jones, 1999 Hall of Fame.

July 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: The Fight The Public Demands … But Is It Going To Happen? Color Pinup: David Tua. Interview: Tommy Brooks. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Tony Marshall, best of the century.

Aug. 1999: Lewis vs. Holyfield II: Should We Expect Anything Different Next Time? Color Pinup: Fernando Vargas. Interview: David Reid. Also: Ibeabuchi-Byrd, Melissa Salamone.

Sept. 1999: Mayweather vs. Mosley: Who's The Future Of Boxing? Color Pinup: James Page. Interview: J Russell Peltz. Also: Evander Holyfield, Thomas Hearns, Angel Manfredy.

Oct. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Felix Trinidad. Interview: Jake LaMotta. Also: Tony Ayala, Erik Morales, Junior Jones.

Nov. 1999: De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: "It's Gonna Come Down To Who The Hell Wants It Most!" Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Arturo Gatti. Also: Roy Jones, Sugar Shane Mosley, Vassily Jirov.

Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

Holiday 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Lewis-Holyfield II: Why We Demand A Knockout! Color Pinup: Sharmba Mitchell. Interview: Paulie Ayala. Also: James Toney, James Page & Terronn Millett, decade review.

Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win … And Why. Color Pinup: Vitali Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Also: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Also: Clifford Etienne, over-hyped heavyweights.

Nov. 2000: Sugar Rush! Mosley Achieves Superstardom At Oscar's Expense. Color Pinup: Lennox Lewis. Interview: Jay Larkin. Also: David Tua, Oleg Maskaev, Ben Tackie.

Dec. 2000: Mike Tyson vs. Lennox Lewis: 15 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Interview: Frank Maloney. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Bronco McKart, our heroes' heroes.

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Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

April 2001: Lewis Is Too Much For Tua … But Could Tyson Do Any Better? Interview: Max Kellerman. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko.

June 2001: Trinidad-Jones: Superfight Or Mismatch? Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Mayweather-Corrales, Paul Ingle, Davey Hilton, Tyson's relationship with Vargas, Judah, and Mayweather.

Aug. 2001: Sugar Shane Mosley: Too Sweet For The Bad Boy Era? Interview: Richard Steele. Also: Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, Jesus Chavez.

Oct. 2001: Tito Power—From Fans To Foes … Everyone's Feeling It! Interview: Lou DiBella. Also: Hasim Rahman, Vargas-Rivera, F.I.S.T.

Dec. 2001: Laila Ali: The Fighter, The Sex Symbol … The Future Of Women's Boxing? Interview: Laila Ali. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Tim Austin, Manny Pacquiao, Hector Camacho Jr.

Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom … Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

June 2002: Tyson vs. Lewis: 10-Page Preview & Analysis. Interview: Jameel McCline. Also: *Ali* movie, Dorin vs. Balbi & Ward vs. Leija.

Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Oct. 2002: Vernon Forrest vs. Shane Mosley: Two Careers On The Line! Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Mayweather-Castillo, Hopkins vs. all-time greats, heavyweight scrap heap.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

May 2003: Danger Zone! Will Roy Jones Be Doomed By His Heavyweight Ego? Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Gatti-Ward II, Floyd Mayweather, Erik Morales.

July 2003: Boxing's Biggest X-Factor: Can Hopkins Recover From His Self-Inflicted Wounds? Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Kostya Tszyu, DaVarryl Williamson, 10 best defensive fighters.

Sept. 2003: Sugar Roy? How Jones Rates With The All-Time Greats. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Corrie Sanders, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Kermit Cintron.

Nov. 2003: De La Hoya-Mosley II: Will Three Years And Seven Pounds Make A Difference? Interview: James Toney. Also: Michael Watson, Erik Morales, Jones-Holyfield head-to-head.

Winter 2003: *KO* Interview Arturo Gatti: "Kostya Tszyu Needs Me More Than I Need Him." Also: Mayorga-Forrest II, Zab Judah, Corrales-Casamayor preview, Joe Calzaghe.

Feb. 2004: Shane Mosley: A Second Chance At Superstardom. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Laila Ali, Scott LeDoux, retirement.

April 2004: Human After All: Tarver Makes Jones Turn To Tyson. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Sharmba Mitchell, Toney-McCline preview, trash-talking.

June 2004: What Could Tyson Do To Jones? Interview: Antonio Tarver. Also: Bernard Hopkins, Spinks-Mayorga.

Oct. 2004: Dr. Klitschko: The Perfect Band-Aid For The Heavyweight Division. Interview: Diego Corrales. Also: Monte Barrett, Cory Spinks, Vinny Paz & Sven Ottke.

Feb. 2005: Exclusive KO Interview—Manny Pacquiao. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Manning Galloway, quitting, perfect heavyweight.

June 2005: Heavyweight Champ Vitali Klitschko: He's A Lot Better Than You Think! Interview: John Ruiz & Norman Stone. Also: Glen Johnson, 2004 in review.

Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Re-tooled Vargas Gets Defensive. Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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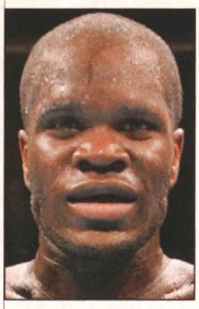
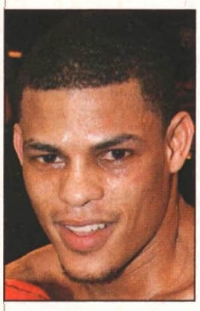


Sechew Powell, junior middleweight (March 2006 issue): Powell was on a great run until he stepped on to higher terrain and took on former IBF junior middleweight titleholder Kassim Ouma in August 2006. It was a great leap for the budding Powell, and a painful one, as he suffered a 10-round decision loss. "The Iron Horse" rebounded nicely with a unanimous 10-round decision over Ishe Smith on HBO's *Boxing After Dark* in February 2007. Powell can certainly rebuild and get himself in a position where he is ready for an Ouma-caliber opponent by next year. He's since left promoter Lou DiBella and has been fighting under the Florida-based Warriors Boxing banner. A change in promoters, however, won't change Powell's lack of firepower.

Record: 21-1 (12)

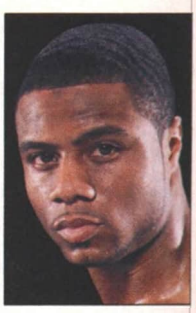
Nonito Donaire, flyweight (April 2006 issue): Donaire is easily the most accomplished of this group. He surprised the boxing world with his upset knockout victory of Vic Darchinyan to claim the IBF flyweight strap on July 7. He's since become somewhat of a celebrity in his native Philippines, where he resided until he was 10. Donaire vaulted to the number-one flyweight contender in THE RING ratings, when Daisuke Naito upset Pongsaklek Wonjongkam for the WBC flyweight title. Donaire said he would like to face number-two rated Naito this fall for what would be for THE RING flyweight world championship. But his management may have other plans, instead taking an easier first defense.

Record: 18-1 (11)



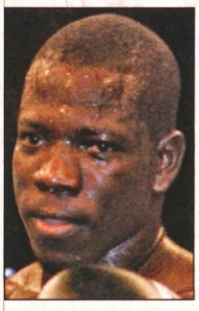
Elio Rojas, featherweight (June 2006 issue): "The Kid" has a great story, fighting in memory of his deceased father. He was thinking seriously about moving to junior lightweight when he first appeared as a "New Face," but instead decided to stay at 126. It didn't seem to be a bad move, as Rojas proceeded to win his next four fights. That run included a pair of signature victories over previously undefeated Johnnie Edwards and veteran Luis Bolano. But the streak stopped when Rojas suffered a close, split-decision loss to Gamaliel Diaz. Rojas has remained active, though buried deep on Don King's massive cards.

Record: 19-1 (13)



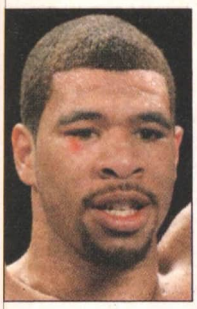
Jean Pascal, super middleweight (July 2006 issue): Whereas some "New Faces" sway either negatively or positively, Pascal mainly continued to move along the same course he was following when THE RING profiled him. Then, in early-August, Pascal took a major step up when he fought Kingsley Ikeke, winning a unanimous decision over the former contender. The victory placed Pascal on the brink of THE RING's super middleweight ratings. What's more, Pascal won on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*, which gave fans outside of Canada a chance to see him. Pascal's not avoiding anyone. His last five opponents had a combined record of 63-12-2 going in. If Pascal has a weakness, it could be his chin. He grabbed Ikeke, who was coming off a 20-month layoff, almost every time he took a solid shot.

Record: 18-0 (13)



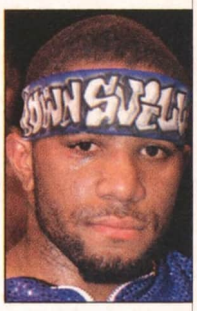
Edison Miranda, middleweight (August 2006 issue): If Nonito Donaire is the most accomplished of the group, Miranda is certainly the most exciting. "Pantera" already had a victory over a world-class opponent when he appeared in THE RING, having stopped Howard Eastman in seven rounds. He then pounded Arthur Abraham, but lost in a foul-plagued unanimous decision. Miranda rebounded with victories over Willie Gibbs and previously undefeated Allan Green, before walking into Kelly Pavlik, who splattered Miranda in the seventh round. Miranda, who says he's moving up to super middleweight, will continue to get fights because of his all-action style, but if he does not improve his boxing skills, he'll become the Colombian version of Ricardo Mayorga.

Record: 28-2 (24)



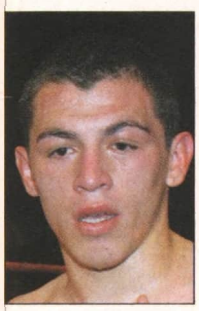
Anthony Peterson, lightweight (September 2006 issue): The harder hitter of the two Peterson brothers could also be among the most talented of this group. Peterson is just one of four fighters in this class of "New Faces" (with Edison Miranda, Nonito Donaire, and Rodel Mayol) that is rated by THE RING. Peterson has the managerial connection with Shelly Finkel, and the only thing that seems to be separating Peterson from a title is time. His last two opponents had a combined 55-6-2 record, and Peterson stopped them both.

Record: 23-0 (17)



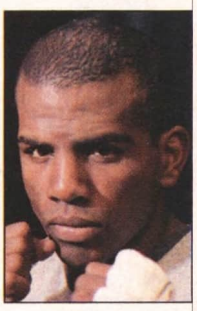
Curtis Stevens, super middleweight (October 2006 issue): "Showtime" was given the chance of getting into prime time when he faced former Olympian Andre Dirrell in June 2007. What resulted was the fight from hell. Dirrell looked awful in victory, and Stevens appeared terribly undersized and completely out-skilled in a fight billed as the future of the super middleweight division. Stevens and promoter Lou DiBella had an amicable split, but he's still managed by Chris Lorenzo, a major rap impresario. Stevens was still looking for a promoter as of presstime. He also still needs a plenty of improvement. His trouble may be that he thinks he's much better than he actually is.

Record: 17-2 (12)



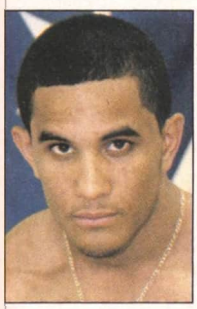
Jorge Paez Jr., lightweight (November 2006 issue): With a name like Paez, you would figure that should open some doors, right? It hasn't exactly worked out that way for Paez Jr. as well as it has for, say, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. Paez Jr. doesn't appear as if he has the same skills as his old man. Jorge Jr. started his pro career well, at 9-0 (7), but as the competition improved, the pop in his punch waned. He then suffered his first defeat, a fourth-round stoppage against Ramon Guevara in March 2007. Since then, Paez Jr. has had three comeback victories against fighters with a combined record of 13-21-4.

Record: 16-1 (10)



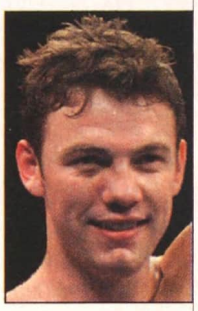
Jose Antonio Izquierdo, junior welterweight (December 2006 issue): Promoter Gary Shaw was getting Izquierdo steady work, but "The El Cubano Mexicano" appeared to have taken one step beyond his learning curve when he faced veteran Cesar Soto in April 2007. Izquierdo suffered a close but unanimous decision setback. The defeat may have said more about Izquierdo than Soto, who was 3-11-1 in his last 15 fights entering the Izquierdo bout. Izquierdo may not be as good as originally advertised.

Record: 16-1-1 (13)



Elvin Ayala, middleweight (January 2007 issue): Ayala overcame the lure of the streets to start off his pro career successfully, winning his first 16 fights. But the "New Face" feature seemed to be the kiss of death for Ayala. Since appearing in THE RING, Ayala has gone 2-2, suffering a pair of losses to David Banks. Ayala has rebounded nicely by winning two straight fights, campaigning now as a middleweight, fighting on club shows near his New Haven, Connecticut, home.

Record: 18-2 (8)



Andy Lee, middleweight (February 2007 issue): Since appearing as a "New Face," Lee stopped four of his next five opponents, typifying the rangy Irish southpaw's power. Playing off his Irish heritage, Lee has built a strong fan base, often appearing on Wladimir Klitschko undercards. Having Hall of Famer Emanuel Steward as his trainer is another bonus. The aim, Steward said, is to get Lee in position for a title shot in 2008.

Record: 10-0 (7)

WBO Heavyweight Title

Evander Holyfield

Main Event 12 Rounds

Sultan Ibragimov

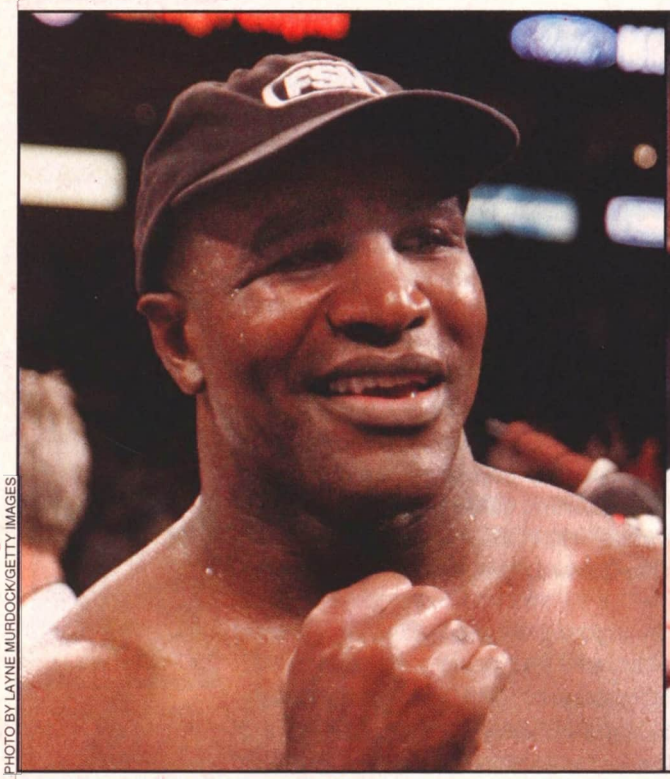


PHOTO BY LAYNE MURDOCK/GETTY IMAGES

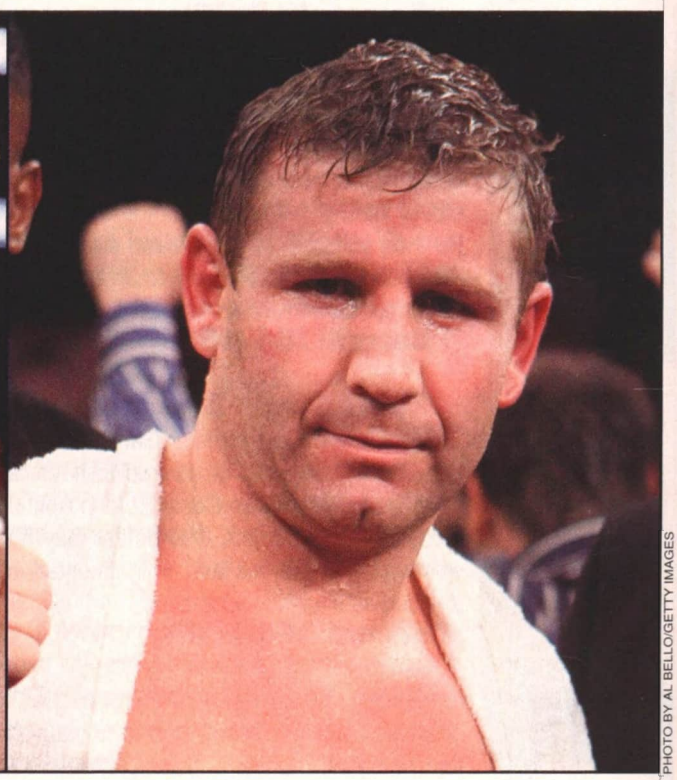


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

When heavyweight Ruslan Chagaev withdrew from an alphabet unification with Sultan Ibragimov due to an undisclosed illness, it left an opening for former world champion Evander Holyfield to garner an unexpected shot at Ibragimov's WBO trinket.

Holyfield will be only a few days short of his 45th birthday when he steps into the ring with the 32-year-old Ibragimov on October 13 at the Khodynak Ice Palace in Moscow. And while "The Real Deal's" quixotic campaign to regain the unified heavyweight title remains a long shot at best, at least he won't be able to say he never had the opportunity to try. Still, even in the unlikely event that the American wins, he'll have a lot of work ahead of him before he's again considered the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.

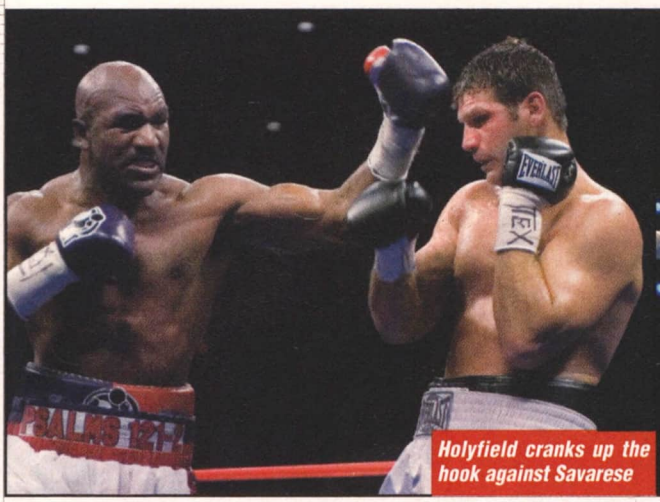
For Ibragimov, it's a chance to add a highly recognizable name to his resume and impress the folks back home, where he hasn't fought since March 2004.

While not exactly the kind of match that gets the blood boiling, Holyfield has retained a significant portion of his popularity with mainstream fans. Therefore, an upset victory could very well pump unforeseen life into a moribund division.

Evander Holyfield

Sultan Ibragimov

Record and World Rating



Holyfield cranks up the hook against Savarese

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

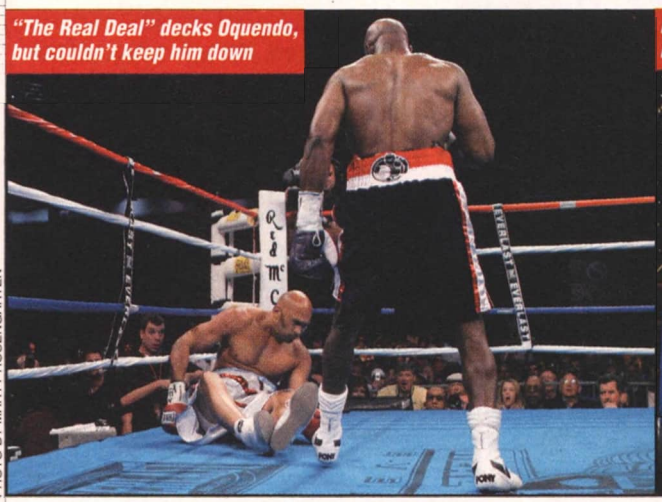
Ibragimov tries to find an opening in Austin's defense

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is 42-8 with 27 knockouts ... Turned pro in November 1984 after winning the light heavyweight bronze medal at the Olympic Games ... Won WBA cruiserweight title in '86, IBF cruiser belt in '87, and unified title by capturing WBC belt in '88 ... Won undisputed heavyweight title in '90, lost it in '92, regained WBA and IBF portions in '93, and lost both belts in '94 ... Regained WBA belt in '96 and IBF title in '97 ... Lost both titles in '99, regained WBA title in '00, and lost it in '01 ... Not ranked by THE RING.

Is 21-0-1 with 17 knockouts ... Won heavyweight silver medal at both 2000 Olympics and European Amateur Championships ... Took bronze in '01 World Amateur Championships ... Turned pro in May 2002 ... Garnered WBO Asia Pacific heavyweight title in '04 and made six successful defenses ... Won WBO heavyweight title in 2007 ... Is ranked sixth at heavyweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



"The Real Deal" decks Oquendo, but couldn't keep him down

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Mora lasts less than a minute against Ibragimov

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

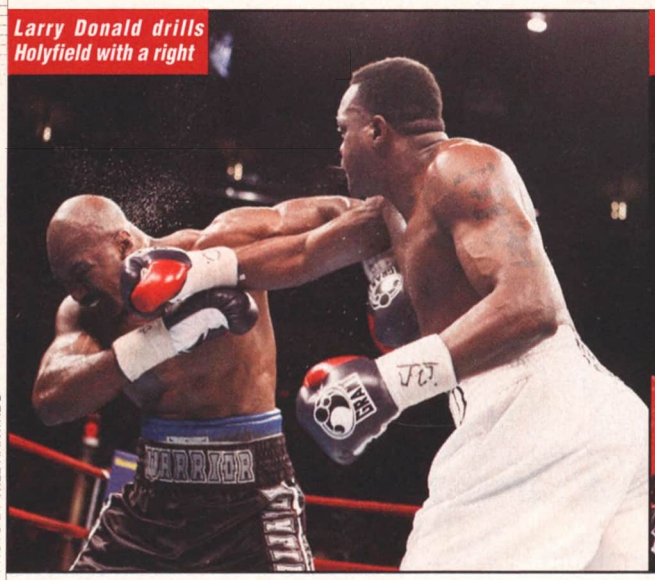
Will turn 45 four days after the fight ... Stands 6'2½" with a 78-inch reach ... Has undergone several shoulder surgeries ... Reflexes and hand speed have declined significantly with age ... Still well-conditioned, still has a great chin.

Is 32 years old ... Stands 6'2" ... Somewhat soft-looking physique is misleading ... Strong upper body and well-conditioned legs ... Cuts not a major problem ... Good but not great chin, as illustrated by knockdown suffered against Ray Austin.

Evander Holyfield

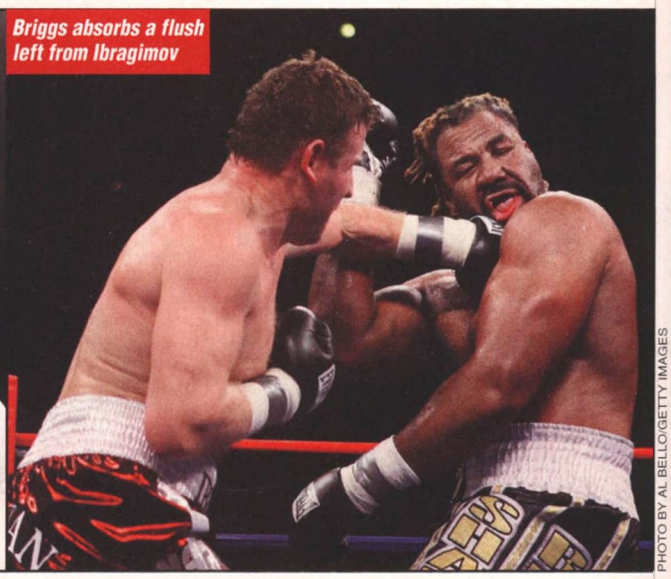
Sultan Ibragimov

Best Weapons



Larry Donald drills Holyfield with a right

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO



Briggs absorbs a flush left from Ibragimov

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Can still deliver a great left hook and teeth-rattling right, but not with anywhere near the frequency of old ... Dogged determination and magnificent fighting heart still intact, but can't pull the trigger as quickly as during his prime ... Still capable of going 12 hard rounds.

Thinking boxer with solid fundamentals ... Scores most of his points with a quick, accurate left hand out of a southpaw stance ... Mixes punches well to head and body ... Not a particularly devastating puncher despite decent kayo percentage and 46-second blowout of Javier Mora.

Previous Fight

Tallied crowd-pleasing 10-round unanimous decision over Lou Savarese by scores of 99-87, 98-90, and 96-91 on July 30 in El Paso, Texas ... Floored Savarese with a chopping right in the fourth, and then again in the ninth with a left hook, to produce best showing of latest comeback ... Pleasing performance aided by Savarese's age (41) and lack of speed.

Annexed WBO strap with unanimous 12-round decision over Shannon Briggs by scores of 119-109, 117-111, and an out-of-whack 115-113 on July 2 in Atlantic City, New Jersey ... Except for a couple of right hands in the second round, Briggs provided very little competition, allowing the Russian to box his way to a comfortable victory.

Quality of Opposition

Fought and defeated a who's who of both the cruiserweight and heavyweight divisions during his prime, but hasn't beaten a top-10 fighter since 2002 ... Latest string of comeback wins included victories over Jeremy Bates (KO 2), Fres Oquendo (W 12), Vinny Madalone (KO 3), and Savarese ... Oquendo, the best of a mediocre bunch, trailed by only a single point on two of the three official scorecards.

Professional opposition has not been as good as most of his amateur adversaries ... Wins over washed-up former cruiser titleholder Al Cole (KO 3), soft-chinned Zuri Lawrence (KO 11), and gentle giant Lance Whitaker (KO 7) led to an ugly 12-round draw with Ray Austin in alphabet eliminator ... Briggs the highest profile foe to date.

Defense

His days of bouncing in and out of range on pogo stick legs are long gone, but the ability of duck and block remains to some extent ... Never a defensive whiz, still relies on grinding pressure to offset opponent's offense ... Granite chin remains a major plus.

Well-considered tactics and good mobility allowed him to avoid Briggs' occasional offensive bursts ... Knows how to interrupt rival's rhythm with southpaw jab ... Solid grounding in the fundamentals during international amateur career still paying dividends.

Evander Holyfield

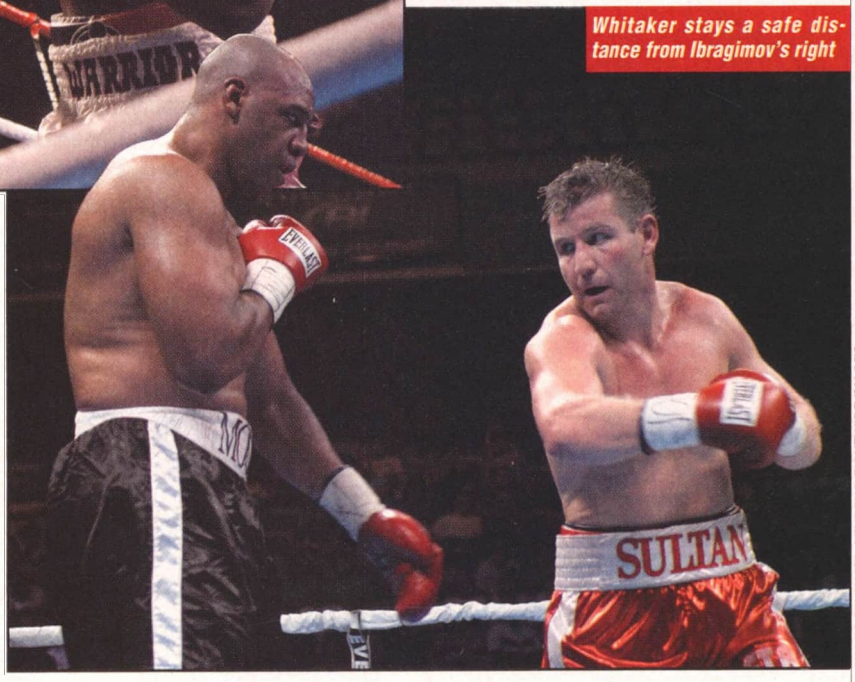
Sultan Ibragimov

Style

Journeyman Bates can't withstand Commander Vander's firepower

PHOTO BY LAYNE MURDOCK/GETTY IMAGES

The mind wants to do all the things he used to do, but the body is no longer willing ... Still comes to fight and rumbles forward in search of the knockout, but hand-eye coordination and the energy to fight hard for three minutes of every round have dissipated gradually as the years and tough fights took their toll.



Whitaker stays a safe distance from Ibragimov's right

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Thinking left-hander with good basic skill set ... Not particularly great at any one aspect of the sport, but competent in all areas ... Uses stand-up Eastern European style that relies more on blocking punches with arms and gloves than utilizing upper-body movement ... Went into run-out-the-clock mode during final rounds versus Briggs.

The Questions

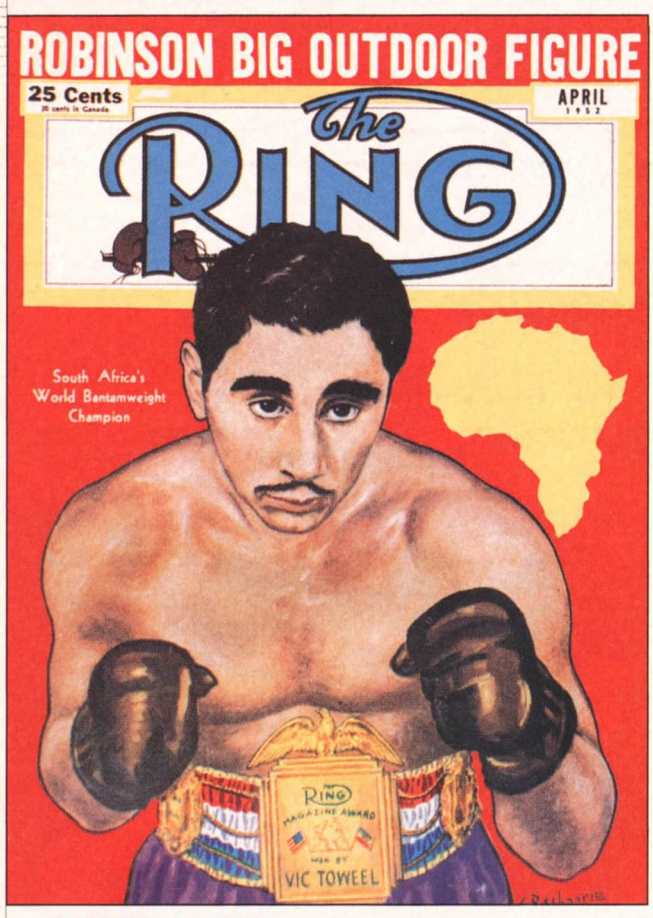
Can he take advantage of this unanticipated opportunity against an opponent he would have handled with relative ease in his prime? Can he turn back the calendar for more than shorts bursts of time? Can he get a fair decision against a Russian in Moscow? Could this actually be the beginning of his quest to reunify the heavyweight title?

Will he be awestruck by Holyfield's legendary reputation and Hall of Fame resume? Can he take "The Real Deal's" best shot, similar to the left hook that floored Savarese? Will he be overconfident fighting an opponent almost 13 years older than him? Is he capable of sending Holyfield into permanent retirement?

The Outcome

The fresher Ibragimov's younger reflexes allow him to withstand steady pressure from the well-conditioned ex-champ and box his way to a unanimous decision. It will, however, be close enough to convince Holyfield to continue his delusional quest to regain the heavyweight crown.

April 1952



COVER STORY: While the headline "Robinson Big Outdoor Figure" is prominently displayed over the logo, the cover illustration by C.R. Schaare is of "South Africa's World Bantamweight Champion" Vic Toweel. The story inside, however, is titled "Toweel The Goods, Says Jack Solomon."

British promoter Solomon had joined forces with the Transvaal National Sporting Club to stage Toweel's third defense of the 118-pound title he'd won from Manuel Ortiz in May 1950. While the South African turned back the challenge of Britain's Peter Keenan via 15-round decision in front of a record-breaking crowd of 25,000 in Johannesburg, it was not a pleasing fight, as far as writer Wilf Garforth was concerned.

"Both boxers were warned for holding, hitting on the break, and other roughhouse tactics. The visitor was the greater offender and many were keenly disappointed by his showing."

Despite Solomon's opinion that Toweel was "one of the greatest little fighters the bantam division has seen in the past two decades," the South African lost the title to Jimmy Carruthers later that year.

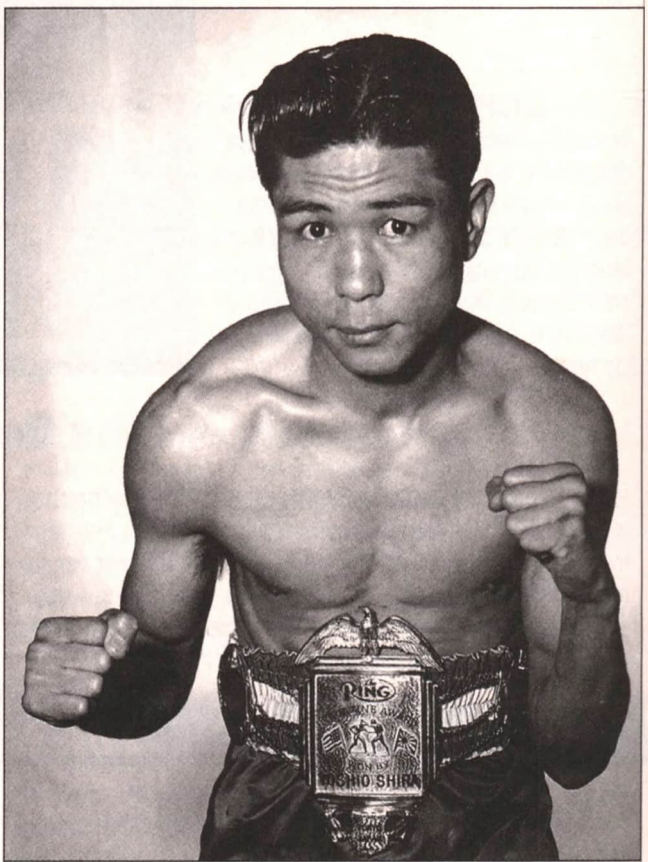
World Champions

(For the period ended February 18, 1952)
Heavyweight: Jersey Joe Walcott
Light Heavyweight: Joey Maxim
Middleweight: Ray Robinson
Welterweight: vacant
Lightweight: Jimmy Carter
Featherweight: Sandy Saddler
Bantamweight: Vic Toweel
Flyweight: Dado Marino

"Fired By Ambition" Middleweight champ Ray Robinson's desire to challenge light heavyweight Joey Maxim inspired writer Al Buck to look at fighters who have attempted to win world titles in three weight classes.

"Robinson appears to be the only fighters with a chance to join Bob Fitzsimmons and Henry Armstrong with three titles to his credit," wrote Buck.

Sugar Ray got his chance later that year, but was stopped by Maxim in the 14th round.



Shirai led Japan's charge into big time boxing

Marciano did not impress against washed-up Savold

"Japan Invades World Boxing" by Johnny Salak was prompted by Yoshio Shirai's seventh-round knockout of reigning flyweight champion Dado Marino in a non-title bout the previous December.

"This, in many respects, is the dawn of a new era for the Japanese, who, since the occupation of their country by American troops at the close of the Second World War, have shown an all-out effort in organized sports with surprising results," wrote Salak.

His words proved prophetic when Shirai captured the world 112-pound title by outpointing Marino shortly after this issue was published.

"Gavilan Retains U.S. Title By A Nose" by Tom Ephrem covers Kid Gavilan's split decision victory over Bobby Dykes in front of 11,526 fans at the Miami (Florida) Stadium. Gavilan's second-round knockdown of Dykes provided the Cuban's narrow margin of victory.

Although the National Boxing Association and the New York State Athletic Commission recognized Gavilan as the welterweight champion after he beat Johnny Batton for the title vacated by Ray Robinson, THE RING, the European Boxing Union, and the British Boxing Board of Control did not, hence the "U.S. title" mentioned in the headline.

"Marciano Loses Prestige In Stopping Lee Savold" by Jersey Jones rips into the future heavyweight champion for being "unable to knock a feeble, fightless, 35-year-old Lee Savold off his feet even once during the six rounds their affair lasted in Philadelphia's Convention Hall ... Supposedly a dynamic puncher, with a previous record of 33 knockouts in 38 winning fights, Marciano showed himself to be little more than a willing but crude, cumbersome mauler."

Considering that Marciano knocked out Jersey Joe Walcott to win the heavyweight title later that year, Jones' critique seems a bit harsh in retrospect.

"Broadcast From New York" by Jersey Jones explains the "Robinson Big Outdoor Figure" cover headline: "Though less shows were staged [in New York] during the year, the taxes on admission produced an increase of $7,006, but this was accounted for by the sensational turnout for Ray Robinson and Randy Turpin at the Polo Grounds. The $767,626 represented the biggest gate drawn by the International Boxing Club in its three years of promoting. The state's take was a robust $33,404."

"Home Town Prides" by writer/illustrator Ted Carroll explores the economic importance of fighters who can attract large crowds to watch them fight in their hometowns, and how they have been boxing's "life-saver" down through the years.

Among the ticket-sellers discussed was Philadelphia welter Gil Turner, who drew 14,627 and 15,595 fans, respectively, for his non-title bout with Charlie Fusari and Ike Williams. Other local favorites discussed are Providence, Rhode Island, featherweight George Araujo, and heavyweight prospect Harry Matthews, who had "the whole state of Idaho behind him."

"Television And Boxing" notes that former heavyweight contender Abe Simons, who twice challenged Joe Louis for the heavyweight title, had turned to acting and recently appeared in the weekly TV show *Charley Wild, Private Detective*.

"Canadian Maritime News" is highlighted by a "crowd-pleasing" five-round exhibition between heavyweight champion Jersey Joe Walcott and Jackie Burke that attracted 3,000 spectators to the Saint John (New Brunswick) Forum. ■

Turner knocks out Fusari in front of 14,627 in Philly

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

HIV: Boxing's Hidden Danger

Are HIV positive fighters competing? Unfortunately, the answer is yes, and although the reasons are complex, the solution is simple.

Even though HIV testing of boxers began in the late-1980s in Great Britain and in the early-1990s in the United States, commission statutes regarding HIV are not uniform. Shamefully, only 35 out of 58 United States commissions, including tribal nations, test for HIV. Therefore, it logically follows that in the remaining 23 jurisdictions, including Florida, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and West Virginia, HIV positive fighters could be prevalent.

PHOTO BY CHUCK SAUS

Morrison's HIV status is questionable, but there are HIV positives active today

Some commissions that do require HIV tests check every six months, while others check once a year. Some require a fighter to present a negative test result, while others require the fighter to simply undergo the test. In the latter instance, the results could be argued, and a HIV fighter could be allowed to compete depending on the inclination of the jurisdiction.

If a fighter tests positive and already holds a license to box in that state, he is placed on suspension. If not, his license is denied, and he is "red-flagged" on the Federal Suspension List (FSL) managed by Fight Fax Inc. It then becomes the responsibility of an individual commission to follow up on that notation if the fighter applies in its state.

Anibal Miramontes, former president of Fight Fax, acknowledges the lack of uniformity regarding HIV positive fighters. "It is ridiculous that all commissions don't stop a fighter that is HIV positive," he said. "But I understand that some do not have the teeth to stop them."

Miramontes mentioned Tommy Morrison as an example. Morrison tested positive twice for HIV in Nevada in 1996/97. The results were confirmed and he was red-flagged. Morrison, claiming he was misdiagnosed, was recently allowed to fight in West Virginia, where they don't require HIV testing. In this instance, however, West Virginia required him to be retested.

"That was a mistake," said Miramontes of West Virginia's reliance on out-of-state test results. "Morrison took the test in Arizona. If I was a commissioner, I would have had him take the test right in front of me."

Actually, as West Virginia regulations do not require blood tests, one could make an argument that they have no right to deny a license to an HIV positive fighter.

On January 12, 2007, New Jersey commissioner Larry Hazzard placed a veteran heavyweight on the FSL after he tested positive for HIV. (Although THE RING knows the

fighter's name and has confirmed he was red-flagged for testing HIV positive, as there has not been an open hearing on his medical test, his identity is considered privileged information.) The fighter fought in Florida on the same date, and then fought in Kansas on April 13.

Several calls placed to Kansas Commission Director Aaron Davis were not returned. The heavyweight suffered a technical knockout in Kansas and was given an arbitrary 30-day suspension. Although Kansas doesn't require the testing, if they knowingly allowed an HIV fighter in the ring to possibly infect his opponent, the referee, and others at ringside that might have come in contact with his blood, it would be a case of gross negligence.

Pat English, boxing safety advocate and attorney for Main Events, believes that no HIV positive fighter should ever be allowed to compete and that there is no excuse for commissions ignoring the FSL.

"I would fire all the people involved," said English. "Every state has to test, and it has to be done right in front of you. I believe this is a legal issue, and there is legal liability for anyone allowing a fighter with HIV to fight."

Hazzard agrees: "We give Congress all the ammunition they need to federally legislate boxing. It is absurd. The first thing that needs to happen is all states need to be consistent in their regulations for licensure. It is comical to see the inconsistency and variety between commission regulations. These commission members go to these Association of Boxing Commissions (ABC) conventions and sit there for hours, yet come away with no consistency in adopting regulations."

Lorenzo Fertitta, former Nevada commissioner and co-owner of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, doesn't need a commission to dictate policy. "Blood testing in combat sports in non-negotiable," said Fertitta. "It must be done. By non-testing or allowing someone who has tested positive in the past to compete, they are putting the opponent, referee, and even the people at ringside at serious risk. We would not allow this in the UFC, WEC, or Pride."

Bottom line: There is no reasonable excuse for a U.S. commission to not test fighters for HIV. If regulations need to be changed, change them. No one's hands are tied. This is just another way boxers' health and welfare are ignored, and demonstrates disrespect for a sport.

***

Anyone who has ever met heavyweight Lamon Brewster would agree he is an intelligent, talented athlete, but even an intelligent man can make a career-ending mistake. In April 2006, Brewster lost a 12-round unanimous decision to Sergei Liakhovich in Cleveland, Ohio. He went into the fight with an eye problem, but his ophthalmologist advised the Ohio Commission he was stable to fight. That doctor was wrong.

During the fight, Brewster reportedly suffered further injury to his eye. The Ohio Commission placed him on an indefinite suspension, pending clearance from an appropriate eye specialist.

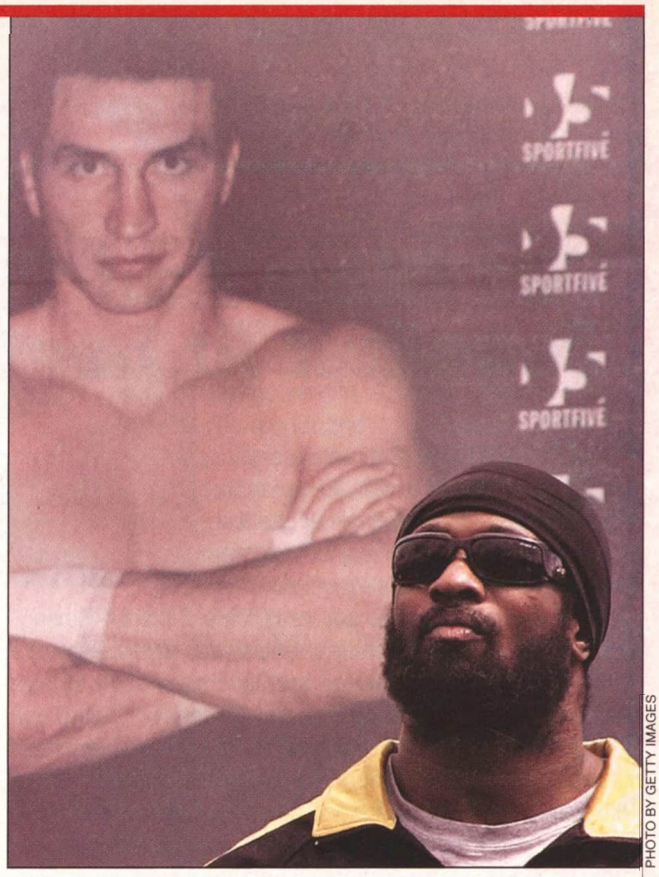


PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

Was Brewster fit to fight Klitschko in Germany?

Boxing is an international sport, and the FSL often contains suspensions from foreign countries. Nonetheless, those nations are not bound by U.S. federal law. As a result, when Brewster fought Wladamir Klitschko in Germany on July 7, that commission was under no obligation to adhere to our suspension list, even if they had known about it.

In the United States, if a fighter is on suspension, only the jurisdiction that gave the fighter the suspension is able to remove it. It is against federal law for a fighter to fight while on suspension, but as indicated above, it happens all too often, and few, if any, commissions pursue this offense.

Until proven otherwise, Brewster fought Klitschko medically unfit. But nobody did anything about it. Neither the Ohio commission nor the ABC made an effort to contact the German commission. Perhaps they thought it was outside their purview? Perhaps Brewster was disingenuous with his trainer and corner, but they certainly didn't refuse to stand beside him that night.

HBO, the network that broadcast the fight in the U.S., questioned Brewster on the air about his medical condition, but was curiously mute when Lamon said he would risk his eyesight for this fight. I guess this was also outside their purview. The German commission either never knew about Brewster's medical history or chose to ignore it.

Anyone who works in boxing should be an advocate for the boxers. Sometimes that means standing up and saying "no" when no one else has the guts. But, apparently, nobody cared enough to protect Brewster. ■

By Jim Bagg

The Bible And The Baggman: Together At Last

When Nigel Collins recently took a break from smooching with Bernard Hopkins on pay-per-view television to call the Baggmeister and offer him a column in THE RING, the Baggomatic responded with four simple words: "It's about flippin' time."

How can a magazine call itself "The Bible Of Boxing" without the world's greatest boxing writer, the man who's written columns monumental and moving enough to part the Red Sea, contributing on a monthly basis? Pete Rose being left out of the Baseball Hall of Fame is nothing compared to the absurd notion of His Royal Baggness being left out of THE RING. Jeff Ryan and Ivan Goldman couldn't carry my jockstrap on their best days, so you can imagine the Baggareeno's frustration, issue after issue, being relegated to working for *World Boxing* while inferior talents got published on the pages of the so-called "Bible." Thankfully, the wrong has finally been righted, and we can remove the "so-called" part. This is indeed The Bible of Boxing. And I am your Moses. Or your Jesus. Or whoever you believe in.

But enough about The Baggest Man on the Planet. It's time to blow your minds with the most astute analysis of the boxing world you'll ever read. So ring the bell. The Baggomatic is getting off his stool (or, he's getting off his stain-covered plaid couch that he's had since 1972, if you want to get technical), and he's coming out swinging. And as the title of the column, "Hitting On The Break," implies, you're going to want to protect yourself at all times.

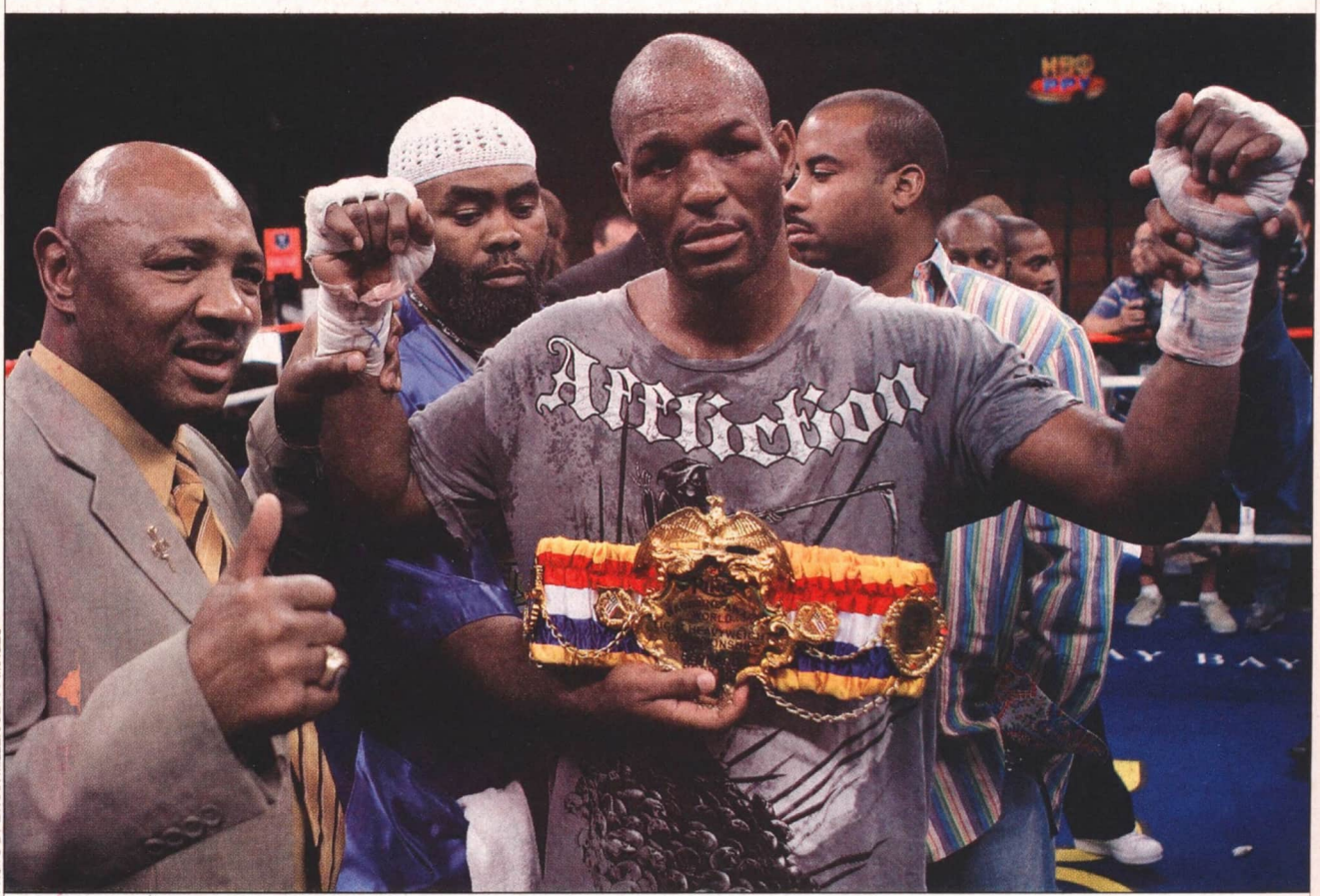


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Even Marvelous Marvin Hagler appreciates Hopkins

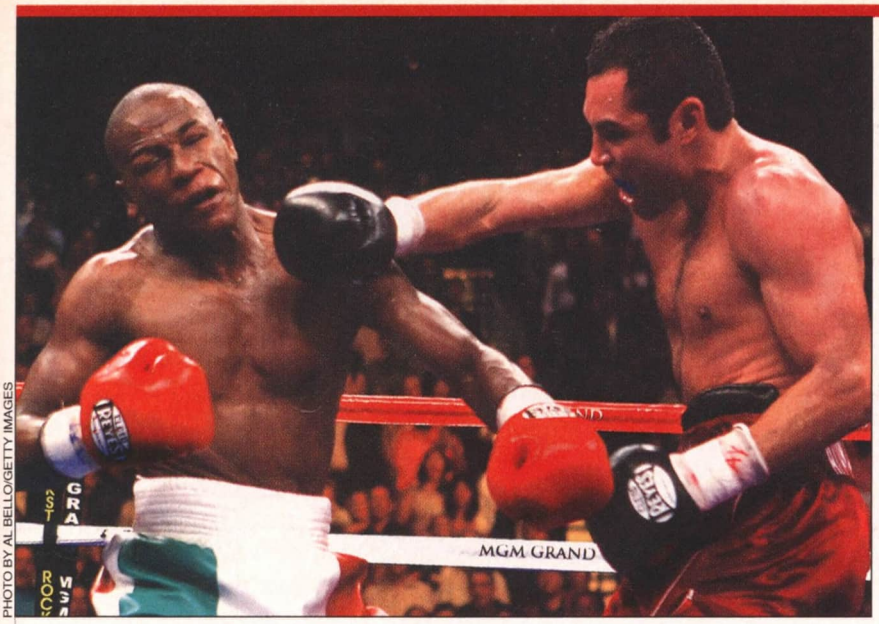


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya drilled Mayweather, but lost the fight and several other key bouts

B-Hop On Top

Every three years, Bernard Hopkins adds another Hall of Fame-bound scalp to his collection, and with each one, his greatness reaches the next plateau. When he dissected Felix Trinidad in 2001, he became an undisputed middleweight champion and probably punched his own ticket for Canastota. When he bodyblasted Oscar De La Hoya in 2004, he elevated himself to mainstream stardom and, with Roy Jones simultaneously unraveling, earned clear entry into any discussion about the best fighters of this era. And when he out-maneuvered Winky Wright in 2007, he made the following statement reality: "The Executioner" is, was, and should forever be recognized as the best of his day.

As we all know, "his day" is a difficult stretch of time to define, and eras overlap. The Bagglestiltskin isn't saying Hopkins is better than Julio Cesar Chavez or Pernell Whitaker; since their primes were basically over by the time Hopkins' first title reign had started, they represent the previous era. The era in question here runs from the mid-'90s to the present, and includes Jones, Ricardo Lopez (who straddled the two eras, but was still in his prime, more or less, during the second half of the '90s), Floyd Mayweather, De La Hoya, etc. Baggy B. Good could delve into who's included in "etc." if he wanted to, but it's really not necessary. Hopkins, Jones, Lopez, Mayweather, and De La Hoya are the only names that qualify at all for the debate over who's number one.

And you can go ahead and cross De La Hoya off right away. He's the biggest star of the day, by a margin wider than the scores in the Daniel Ponce De Leon-Gerry Penalosa fight. But star power should only have the slightest amount of influence over hardcore discussions of greatness. De La Hoya lost to Hopkins, he lost to Mayweather, and he also lost to both Trinidad and Shane Mosley, both of whom lost to Wright. And Wright isn't a part of this discussion. So "The Golden Boy" shouldn't be either. Like the Baggstorm after ignoring the "no hands" rule at the local nudie bar, he's outta here.

Mayweather may go around claiming to be the "greatest of all-time," but whether the category is boxing or hiding piles of cash where people can't find them, it's a hollow claim. If "Pretty Boy" is the greatest fighter ever to lace on gloves, then the Baggamaniac was the best husband ever to place a ring on a finger. Mayweather was blessed with all the ability in the world (minus punching power). But he took his foot off the pedal far too early in his career, in terms of who he fought and how he fought them. At junior lightweight, he was spectacular, cleaning out the division in dominant fashion. At lightweight, he wasn't dominant, but at least he did take on the best possible opponent (Jose Luis Castillo). Since moving up to 140, 147, and 154 pounds, however, he's been too selective about who he fights, and too disinterested in knocking his opponents out. At age 30, Pretty Boy Floyd still has time to take on huge challenges, overcome them sensationally, and become known as the best fighter of this era. But based purely on what he's done so far, sorry, Floyd—that "greatest of all-time" stuff is more comical than compelling.

That leaves Lopez, Jones, and Hopkins. Two guys who campaigned in the 160-to-175-pound range, and one who couldn't even get up to 130 wearing a suit of armor. But regardless of size, Lopez was a boxing artist—and while everyone else was painting "happy little trees," he was swiping his brush across the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. "Finito" was a fighter you had to see to fully appreciate. Unfortunately, there's the nagging problem of the distinct lack of name fighters on his record. He retired undefeated, but we'll never know if that would have been

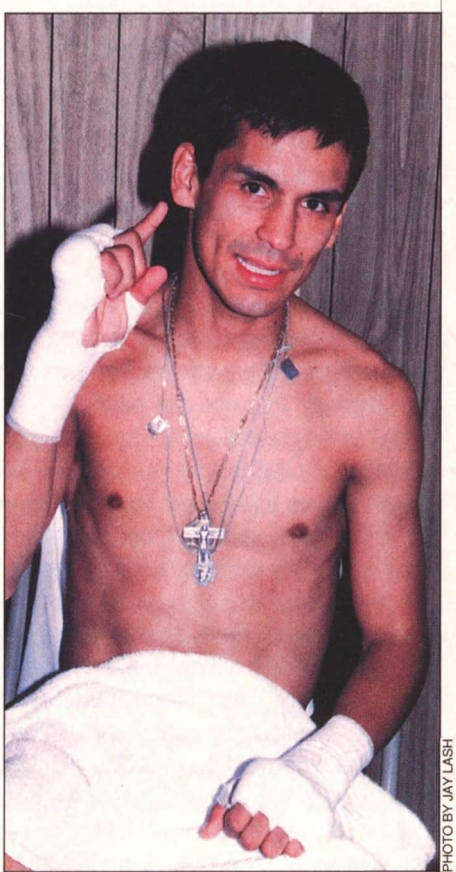


PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Lopez was hurt by a lack of quality opponents

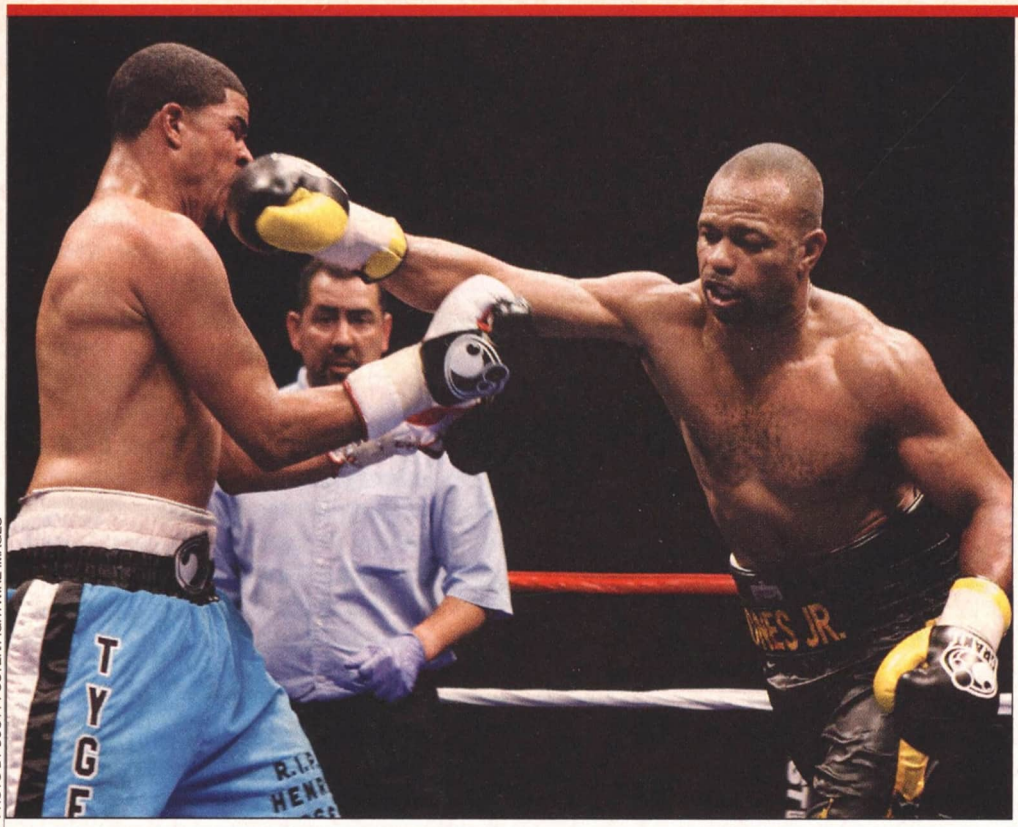


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Jones got past Tony Hanshaw, but has faded badly since 2003

the case if he'd moved up three lousy pounds (in terms the Baggster can relate to: two super-sized Big Mac combos) in the mid-'90s and taken on Michael Carbajal or Chiquita Gonzales. There are a handful of tiny titlists on Lopez' resume, and he did have a meaningful pair of bouts with the excellent Rosendo Alvarez. But he doesn't have a single Hall of Famer on his ledger. Congrats on your induction into Canastota a couple of months ago, Ricky—it was well-deserved—but it would be a stretch for the Baggzinski (and the Baggzinski hasn't stretched since 1981) to call you the greatest fighter of your day.

So it boils down to RJ and B-Hop. Or, if you prefer, The Body and The Brain. Jones was the most physically gifted fighter of his generation, but he never really learned how to box properly. Hopkins has been the most mentally brilliant fighter of his generation, but he wasn't born with the ability to do half of the dazzling things Jones did. When they were both on the way up and not yet into their respective primes, Jones beat Hopkins because his pure, natural athleticism carried the day. But as time went on, it became apparent that we couldn't judge them based purely on that head-to-head matchup. Hopkins learned. He expanded his repertoire. He developed an understanding of how to exploit opponents' weaknesses. And at 42 friggin' years of age, he's still doing that.

Jones never really improved much after that day in 1993 when he won his first belt. His ridiculous speed and his impressive power allowed him to keep winning for the next decade; then he hit the wall and couldn't do anything about it. His chin was exposed, and he didn't have the technique to protect it. He could no longer beat everybody to the punch. He was the pound-for-pound king for quite a while. But when he stopped being king, he did so abruptly and violently.

And Hopkins just keeps going, just keeps adding to his legacy. Call the Bagghorrea biased if you want, call him out for siding with the old-school fighter because His Bagnificence is old-school himself. But the numbers don't lie: a record 20 middleweight title defenses (and a reign that ended on a dubious decision), RING titles in two weight classes, zero knockout losses, zero clear-cut losses after the age of 28. He's the only man to knock out Trinidad, the only man to knock out De La Hoya, the first man to beat Wright decisively in 13 years, and the man who beat Antonio Tarver more convincingly than anyone else did, after moving up 15 pounds to do it.

Jones was great, his accomplishments tremendous (alphabet belts in four divisions, pretty clear supremacy in three of them), but his legacy stalled out after 2003, while Hopkins' has continued to grow. And with the addition of wins over Tarver and Wright in his 40s, Hopkins' has surpassed Jones'.

This is the Bernard Hopkins era. And check back with Bagglio Ordonez in about five years, because it might still be going on.

Bagg-nostications Abound

With the litany of major fights being signed for the last few months of the year, it's time for some predictions from the one and only Baggstradomus—the man who advised Namath to guarantee victory in Super Bowl III, and who told Al Michaels to come to the U.S.-Russia hockey game in '80 with a catch phrase at the ready:

Joe Calzaghe vs. Mikkel Kessler: Ground rule number one (never bet on the white guy) gets thrown out the window. Same with ground rule number two (never bet on the European guy). So we have to go with ground rule number three: Never bet on the guy who's made it to age 35 with hardly a significant test on his record. With the exception of one or two fights, Calzaghe's been matched soft his whole career, whereas Kessler's last five opponents were all world-class. The confidence of your handlers speaks volumes, so the pick is Kessler. And here's where the

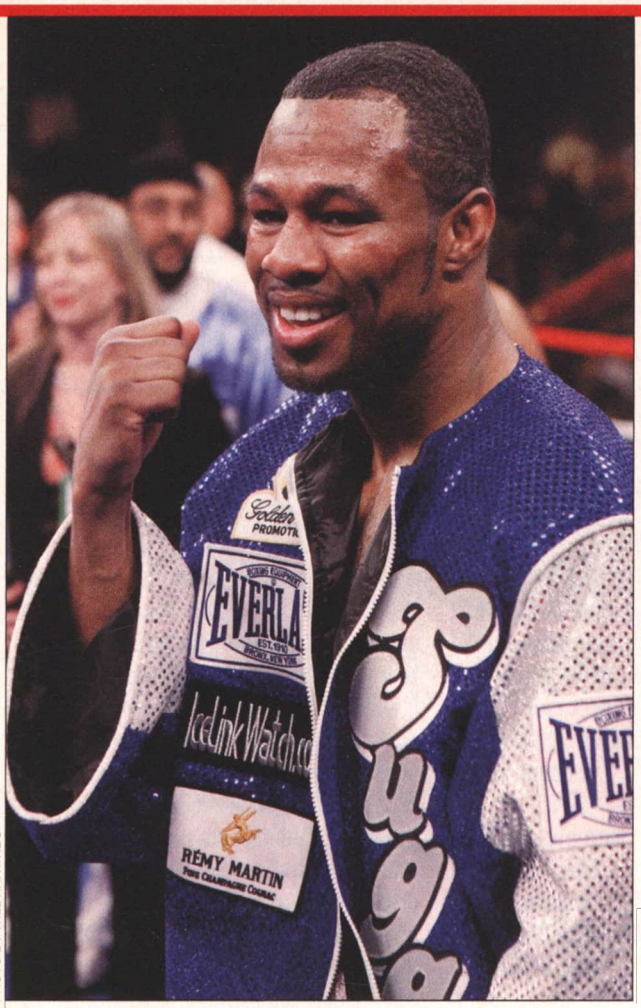


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The Bagg-nosticationer likes Mosley over Cotto

Baggarooni goes out on a limb: Calzaghe busts his hands, takes a pounding, and quits on his stool after the 10th.

Miguel Cotto vs. Shane Mosley: The common misperception is that Cotto's fight against Zab Judah provides some insight into what will happen against Mosley. Okay, Judah has fast hands, and so does Mosley. Any other similarities you can come up with? Didn't think so. Sugar Shane fights nothing like Judah. He won't cave in if the going gets tough, he has a great chin, he's big for 147 pounds, and he can just about match Cotto bodyshot-for-bodyshot. This will be the Fight of the Year, and Mosley will win it by decision.

Floyd Mayweather vs. Ricky Hatton: Remember those ground rules about white guys and European guys? Well, technically, you can use them here, but picking a winner in this fight has nothing to do with the fact that Hatton is whiter than Bob Barker's hair. It's all about the fact that he's going to have a devil of a time catching Mayweather, and on the handful of occasions when he does, he's not going to hit him hard enough to hurt him. The Hatton hordes making the trek across the Atlantic for this one are going to be crying in their beers afterward, because their man will be lucky to win two rounds.

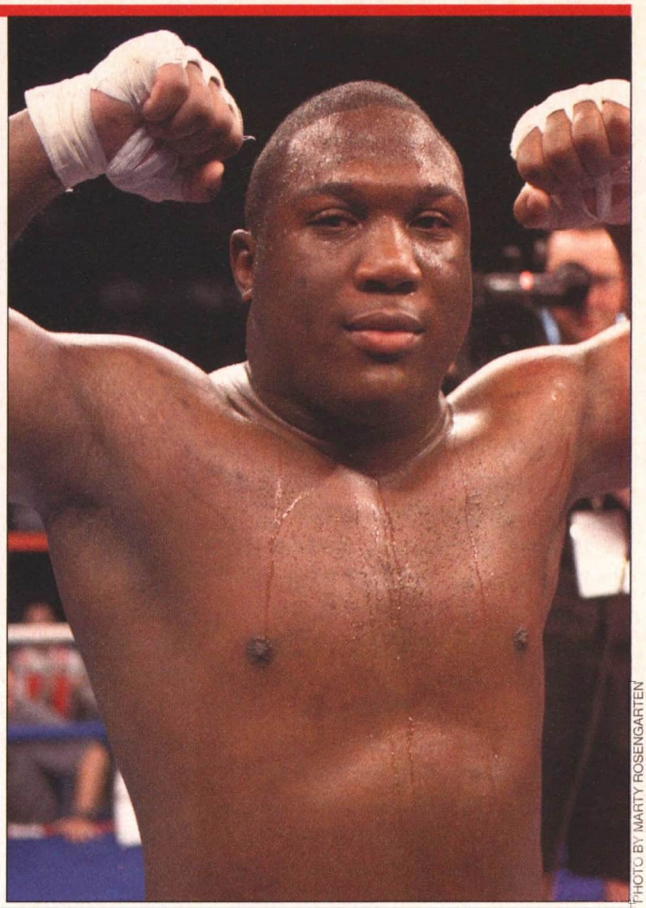


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

King toppled Stiverne to win The Stingray Award

Juan Diaz vs. Julio Diaz: Bet the farm on Diaz. He's the goods.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

First, a word about what The Stingray Award is, to those RING-only ignoramuses who are just now getting their first taste of the Baggadocio. On March 14, 1998, a journeyman heavyweight with a 7-14-1 record named Ron "Stingray" McCarthy scored a second-round kayo over an unbeaten prospect named Stan Allen, inspiring The Big Baggoo to recognize his accomplishment. Trialhorses and journeymen—at least the ones who try hard—are an enormous part of what makes the boxing world go 'round, and when one of them does his job a little too well and upsets some pampered prospect, the Baggapalooza gives him his props in the form of a coveted Stingray Award.

This month, the honor goes to Demetrice King, who carried an ugly 11-15 record into his July fight with Bermane Stiverne, Don King's 12-0 (12) heavyweight prospect. Well, Stiverne's streak of every fight ending with a kayo remained intact. But it was he who suffered the stoppage this time, as King (Demetrice, not Don) came to fight and got the win at 1:59 of round four.

It just so happens that King got a little assist from ref Johnny Callas, who was a tad quick on the trigger with Stiverne stunned but still on his feet. So it's a Stingray with an asterisk. But it's a Stingray just the same. ■

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Hopkins-Wright Reaction

After many years following boxing, I have finally (but temporarily) had enough. The wrestling contest between Bernard Hopkins and Winky Wright would turn anybody off. Emanuel Steward was right when he said that these two can no longer fight the younger fighters; they can only fight older guys. Larry Merchant was also right when he noted that even the most loyal fan is tired of seeing men who did not come to fight, but just to put in their time and collect their large purses.

GEORGE CROSSON
Honokaa, HI

At the age of 42, Bernard Hopkins defeating a top-quality fighter like Winky Wright is amazing. Hopkins is one of the greatest and smartest fighters of all-time. I hope he gets his fight with Joe Calzaghe. I think Hopkins would come up with the perfect game plan, and make adjustments during the fight to give Calzaghe a very tough battle.

EDMUND WHITTINGTON
Seattle, WA

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wight pay-per-view drew mixed reactions for readers of THE RING. George Crosson was unhappy with what he termed a "wrestling match," while Edmund Whittington was amazed that B-Hop is still beating top-notch fighters at the age of 42.

Rule Britannia

Thank you for putting a sword to the lie that Americans don't appreciate British boxers. THE RING has two in its pound-for-pound top 10: Joe Calzaghe and Ricky Hatton.

PHILIP WINTERS
London, England

Conteh Question

What happened to former WBC light heavyweight champion John Conteh. It seems that as soon as he retired from boxing he never had anything to do with it afterward, at least on the world stage. As I am only 16 years old, I never got to see him in action, but I have seen short clips on TV and heard stories of what a great fighter he was from my dad, granddad, and uncles. I was wondering if there are any DVD or VHS I could purchase with footage of his fights, or if there are any books about him that have been published. Please print my e-mail address so people can contact me with any info.

TOM MURPHY
fightnight_scousell@hotmail.co.uk
Liverpool, England

Right On Wright

Kudos to THE RING for not penalizing Winky Wright for jumping two divisions, only to lose to Bernard Hopkins at light heavyweight. Wright is a top-flight middleweight, and his ranking as such should not suffer simply because he couldn't overcome the best light heavyweight in the world.

PAUL MINNIS
pminnis@therepublic.com

Sacrificial Warriors

I would just like to wish Oscar Larios and Czar Amonsot, who both suffered brain bleeds, speedy recoveries. I hope both of them make the right decisions about their respective boxing careers. Larios and Amonsot are warriors, and true fight fans such as myself appreciate

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Oscar Larios takes a left uppercut during a punishing knockout loss to Jorge Linares. Reader Steven Minx writes to express his appreciation to Larios and Czar Amonsot, who was also knocked out on the same card after putting up a valiant fight.

the great sacrifices they made for us in the ring on the Hopkins-Wright undercard. Thanks, guys, and best of luck.

STEVEN MINX
San Bernardino, CA

Trouble At The Hall

So it wasn't just me that was disappointed with this year's IBHOF Induction Weekend. I noticed there was a pretty critical article about this year's induction in the "Round One" section of the October 2007 edition of THE RING.

My son and I have been going to the induction weekend for at least the past 10 years. I have also supported the IBHOF by sending in an annual membership. Whether or not I continue to support the IBHOF and attend upcoming induction weekends will depend on whether changes are made to make the weekend events more fan friendly.

Not only were celebrity workouts absent, I paid $45 (twice) to be herded into a cramped function room with the rest of the paying fans, only to realize that were deliberately kept separated from the boxers and were unable to have any opportunity to meet the celebrities. And, yes, the security was extremely rude.

If the IBHOF and Madison County want to continue to attract fans to Hall of Fame Weekend, they should really try to get their act together and iron out some of the glaring problems that plagued this year's induction.

NICK MUELLER
Framingham, MA

Recalling A Half-Forgotten Great

What a great job Pete Ehrmann did writing the Jimmy Carter article ("Remembering Jimmy Carter: Boxing's Mystery Man") in the October 2007 issue.

On June 12, 1953, I was a very young man (14) traveling from my home in Indianapolis to Los Angeles and stopped off in Omaha to visit my aunt and uncle, who had no TV. I begged them to take me downtown to the Nebraska Furniture Mart where we could watch Jimmy Carter fight George Araujo on their big TV. We joined about 30 other fight fans who came to watch Carter destroy Araujo on the Furniture Mart's TV. That Jimmy Carter could have beaten any lightweight in history, with the possible exception of Roberto Duran.

TOM LOVGREN
Omaha, NE

Witty Ricky

When Ricky Hatton and Floyd Mayweather stand across the ring from each other in December, Hatton may have won a significant part of the war already: the war of words. Hatton is a very witty and accomplished speaker, popular with the fans and press alike. He's a quote machine. Mayweather, for all his talent, comes across as bratish and will encounter a whole new level of irritation as fight time approaches and the press appear to enjoy Hatton's remarks more and more.

In all likelihood, when "The Hitman" and "Pretty Boy" hear that first bell, one of them will be focused on executing his destructive game plan, while the other could well be distracted. Floyd has the edge going in to this fight, but that will be lessened if Ricky manages to get under his skin first, as he did so easily after his recent win over Jose Luis Castillo.

WAYNE MATTHEWS-STROUD
Brighton, England ■

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

A happy-looking Ricky Hatton poses with Laila Ali. Reader Wayne Matthews-Stroud thinks that Hatton's prefight remarks will get under Floyd Mayweather's skin and give the Englishman a psychological edge in their upcoming showdown.

Looking Ahead

By Joe Santoliquito

Mosley To Test Cotto At The Garden

It's almost as if we've watched **Miguel Cotto** grow up right in front of us. We saw the WBA welterweight titlist's steady progression up the boxing food chain, first in small increments, then in huge leaps.

On November 10, the 27-year-old Puerto Rican, one of the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world today, will take the biggest step of his career, when he faces **Shane Mosley** at Madison Square Garden on HBO Pay-Per-View.

It's the kind of fight that merits the same crossover appeal that **Oscar De La Hoya** and **Floyd Mayweather** received when they fought in May. But you won't see Cotto or Mosley adorning the cover of any mainstream sports magazine, so this megafight belongs solely to boxing fans.

Cotto, 30-0 (26), enters the bout coming off the most impressive victory of his career. He smashed the very courageous **Zab Judah** in June, scoring an 11th-round TKO before a partisan Cotto crowd at sold-out Madison Square Garden.

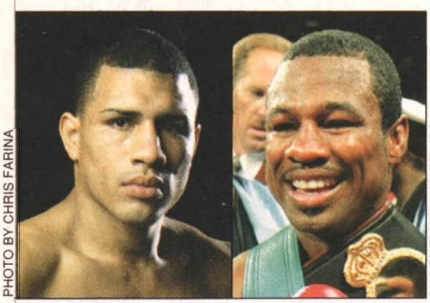


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Cotto faces the biggest test of his career against Mosley

What made the fight so enthralling was the give-and-take action. Though Cotto was rocked a few times by Judah uppercuts, he kept coming forward. Expect the same bull-like style against Mosley. Sugar Shane, however, may punch a little harder than Judah and Mosley's staying power is certainly better than Judah's.

Mosley, 44-4 (37), is coming off one of the longest layoffs in his career. The last time he fought was nine months ago, when he dismantled the game **Luis Collazo** for a lopsided unanimous decision on February 10. It marked the first time Mosley fought at welterweight in 14 months.

Cotto is Mosley's biggest challenge since he faced **Winky Wright** in November 2004. Granted, Mosley stopped **Fernando Vargas** twice in 2006 at junior middleweight, but a very strong argument could be made that it was a shot version of Vargas. Cotto is something different altogether, a fresh young stud in his prime. The expected capacity crowd at the Garden and HBO's PPV customers should be in for a treat.

Mormeck-Haye Date Changed

The **Jean-Marc Mormeck**-**David Haye** world cruiserweight championship fight has been tentatively changed to November 10, set for the same venue, the Palais de Sports Marcel Cerdan, in Levallois, a suburb of Paris, France.

The original date was September 28, and the November date was contingent on promoter **Don King** getting Haye's approval.

Mormeck, 33-3 (22), is in his second reign as the 200-pound champion, having regained the title with a narrow points victory over **O'Neil Bell** in March, avenging an earlier stoppage loss to Bell.

Haye, 19-1 (18), is rated number four by THE RING and carries the kind of power that could unseat Mormeck.

A Double Dose Of Calzaghe-Kessler

When THE RING's undefeated world super middleweight champion, **Joe Calzaghe,** meets unbeaten number-one contender **Mikkel Kessler** on November 3 at the Millennium Stadium, in Cardiff, Wales, it will mark the biggest fight in Europe in over a decade.

And it's a fight that fight fans in the United States will be thoroughly spoiled by because HBO will be televising Calzaghe-Kessler on its regular network, not PPV. The first showing will be live at 5 p.m. Eastern Time (2 p.m. Pacific). A same-day replay will be shown at 10:30 p.m. throughout the country.

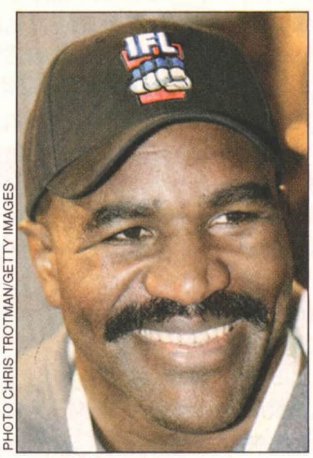


PHOTO CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Will Holyfield still be smiling after he fights Ibragimov?

Listen Up

Former heavyweight champion **Evander Holyfield** will get another chance to win a belt, albeit a minor one, when he travels to Moscow, Russia, to face WBO heavyweight titlist **Sultan Ibragimov** at the Khodynka Arena, October 13, on Showtime. Ibragimov, 21-0 (17), is ranked number-six by THE RING, while Holyfield, 42-8-2 (27), is not rated. Holyfield is on a four-fight winning streak, his most recent victory coming against shopworn **Lou Savarese** in June. Ibragimov is coming off a June victory, winning the WBO trinket against excuse-filled and lethargic **Shannon Briggs** ... That same night, October 13, two of the world's best lightweights will clash, when THE RING's number-one rated **Juan Diaz**, 32-0 (16), faces number-two rated **Julio Diaz**, 34-3 (25), at the Sears Center, in Chicago, Illinois, on HBO ... WBA middleweight titlist **Felix Sturm** will put his belt on the line against **Randy Griffin**, at the Gerry Weber Stadion, in Halle, Germany, on October 20. ■

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Dec. 1981: Heavyweight Contender Greg Page: Is He Better Than Cooney? Also: Duran, Sanchez-Gomez, Taylor.

Feb. 1982: The Only Man Sugar Ray Leonard Is Afraid To Fight. Also: Escalera, Benitez-Duran, Robinson-LaMotta, Sims.

June 1982: Wilfred Benitz Eyes His Fourth World Title: Can He Beat Marvin Hagler? Also: Weaver, Buchanan, M. Spinks, Leonard.

Aug. 1982: Michael Spinks & Howard Davis Jr.: Different Destinies On The Road From Montreal. Also: Richard Sandoval, Big John Tate, Jimmy Bradock, 1956 in review.

Feb. 1983: Howard Davis Jr.: "Why I'll Win The Lightweight Title This Time!" Also: Snipes, Fletcher-Green, Mustafa Muhammad, Tubbs.

April 1983: "The Pain From The Tragedy Has Passed," By Ray Mancini. Also: Broad, Hearns-Benitez, 1982 in review.

BIG BOOK OF BOXING

July 1983: Michael Dokes: How He Can Restore The Decayed WBA Title. Also: Torres, Burns, young heavyweights, Patterson-Johansson, Pryor-Armstrong dream fight.

March 1984: Suppose Sugar Ray Leonard Never Retired, Part I. Also: Tunney, lightweights, Pep-Pedroza dream fight.

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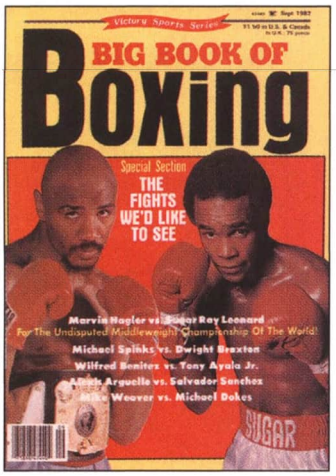

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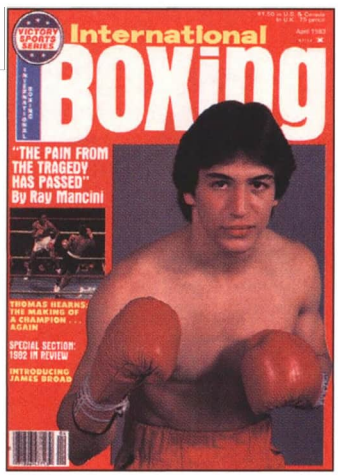

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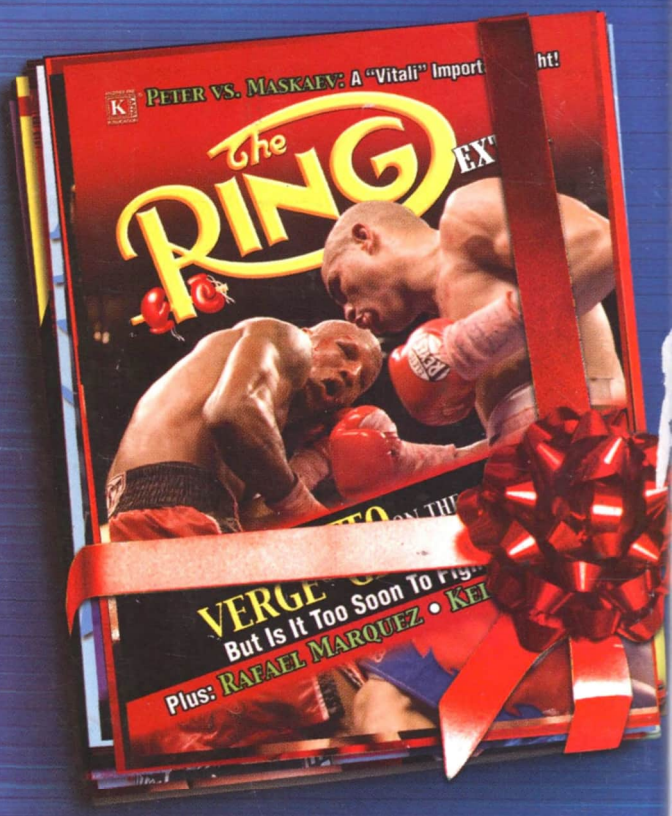

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